Warawanai Ningyo

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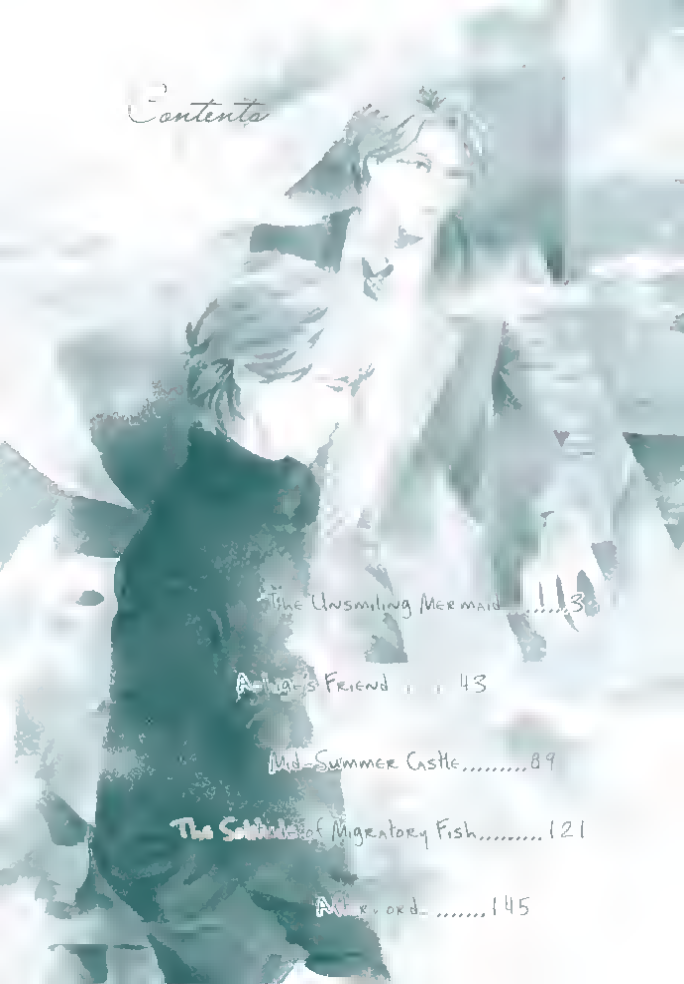
ICHIKO IMA



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The Unsmiling Mermaid

AND KEPT A MERMAID THERE
MY UNCLE BOUGHT A HOUSE WITH A SPECIALLY ATTACHED POOL IN A SEASIDE TOWN
AS A LAWYER, THAT'S HOW I LOOK AT IT. THAT'S WHY IT'S MY DUTY TO EXECUTE HIS WILL.
RATHER, HE WAS PRONOUNCED MISSING.
THIS YEAR MAKES IT SEVEN YEARS SINCE YŌ TERASHIMA WENT MISSING, DOESN'T IT?
IT'S BEEN KEPT VERY CLEAN
THE MANAGEMENT COMPANY COMES ONCE A MONTH TO CLEAN IT.
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW MY UNCLE HAD MADE A WILL.
THIS HOUSE AND THE GROUNDS WERE HIS ONLY PROPERTY

THERE'S EVEN WATER IN THE POOL.
AH, WELL, THE HOUSE HAS BEEN TAKEN CARE OF.
PROBABLY A SMART MOVE FOR THE MANAGEMENT COMPANY. THEY MIGHT HAVE TO SELL THE PLACE.
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE AMERICAN
WE DON'T DECORATE OUR HOUSE WITH PICTURES OF OURSELVES!
MAYBE THE MANAGEMENT COMPANY PUT IT HERE?
...SO THEN, THE OTHER PARTIES ARE ON THEIR WAY?
WHAT ABOUT... WASN'T THE NAME AYUMI?*
TOMORROW AT TWO O' CLOCK. WILL YOUR FATHER BE HERE BY THEN?
YEAH... HE WANTED TO FINISH SOME THINGS UP AT WORK, BUT HE SHOULD BE HERE.
IF WORST COMES TO WORST, AND HE'S NOT HERE IN TIME, I CAN ACT AS HIS PROXY ...
IF THAT'S THE CASE... IT'D BE BEST IF THERE WEREN'T ANY UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS.
*FUN FACT: THE KANJI FOR AYUMI'S NAME MEANS "WALKING"

PLEASE EXCUSE ME
HENCE, I'LL NEED TO SET UP A MEETING
YES, SIR
BECAUSE YOUR FATHER IS THE CLOSEST RELATIVE ALL THE PROPERTY WOULD BECOME HIS...
EVEN IF THE PERSON'S NOT RELATED IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THIS AYUMI KENJOU WAIVES HIS INHERITENCE, THERE WILL BE INHERITENCE TAX
I KNOW. I WAS HERE ONCE BEFORE
THE BATHROOM IS LOCATED
THE GAS, WATER, AND ELECTRICITY ARE ON. BUT... EHHH IT SEEMS THE TELEPHONE'S BEEN SHUT OFF...
I UNDERSTAND YOU'LL BE STAYING HERE TONIGHT?
MY UNCLE WAS SINGLE SO MAYBE THEY WERE LOVERS
IN MY HOUSE MY UNCLE'S NAME WAS TAROO.
I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD DONE SOMETHING BAD WHEN HE WAS YOUNG AND HAD BEEN DISOWNED...
TO THE POINT WHERE EVEN HIS OWN RELATIVES DIDN'T SPEAK OF HIM...
SEVEN YEARS AGO, MY FATHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER, YOTERASHIMA, SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED...
WHEN WE READ THE WILL, THIS HOUSE HAD BEEN GIVEN TO SOME STRANGER WHO LIVED IN THIS TOWN, YUMI KENJOU.

I HEARD HE HAD SOME KIND OF FOREIGN TRADE JOB BUT WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT NOW...
IT DIDN'T EVEN SEEM LIKE HE HAD A STEADY JOB AND HE ALWAYS ACTED CHILDISH
HEY, YOU LIKE YOUR UNCLE'S GOT A POOL!
COME OVER AND PLAY!
YEAH, COME ON!
IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF BUGGING MY HESITANT PARENTS UNTIL THEY LET ME GO OVER JUST THAT ONCE
COME SWIMMING.
I CAN'T SWIM.
THAT'S WEIRD
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN'T LEARN YOU'VE GOT A POOL.
Splash
splish
KEN-CHAN!

MAYBE I WAS STILL HALF-ASLEEP
KEN-CHAN
Splash
IN THE LIGHT REFLECTING OFF HIS PALE BODY, I SAW SCALES...
WHEN MY UNCLE DISAPPEARED THE FOLLOWING YEAR,
I FIGURED THAT THE MERMAID HAD CARRIED HIM AWAY,
RATTLE
THAT THE WHITE FISH HAD DRAWN MY UNCLE INTO THE NIGHT SEA...

DASH
TAP
TAP TAP
WHO'S THERE!?
A THIEF ?
THIS HOUSE IS ALWAYS EMPTY. SO I GUESS IT WOULD BE SAFE,
IF YOU'RE A THIEF YOU DON'T USUALLY COME FOR THE POOL DO YOU...?
BUT STILL WAS IT REALLY A THIEF?
FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT I HAD NIGHTMARES ABOUT BEING CHASED BY A HALF-MERMAID WHO'D RISEN UP FROM THE SEA.
AH— COME IN.
I TRUST LAST NIGHT WASN'T TOO INCONVENIENT FOR YOU?

NOW THEN, YOUR FATHER?
WELL... IT SEEMS HE'S STILL TIED UP.
IS IT HIM?
WITH A NAME LIKE AYUMI I WAS SURE IT'D BE A WOMAN
Umm
THE OTHER PARTY'S ALREADY HERE.
THAT'S A PROBLEM.
IT'S KENJOU
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY IT LOOKS LIKE THE OTHER PARTY HAS BEEN DELAYED AT WORK
I'M KASE HIS LAWYER
PEOPLE ARE OFTEN MISTAKEN
UNCLE, WHO'S THAT?
UH...
THIS IS HIS SON

I'M YOUZUKE TERAJIMA'S NEPHEW
I VISITED HIM ONCE EIGHT YEARS AGO OVER SUMMER BREAK
I HATE HIM! THAT JERK...!
THAT'S MY FRIEND, HIS NAME IS KEN-CHAN
W...S THAT GUY AYUMI KENJOU...?
UM
YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME?
HUH
AH
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'D MEET HERE. I THOUGHT THEY'D DEFINITELY BE TOGETHER AT THIS POINT...
WHO'S THAT?
...HIS NAME IS KEN-CHAN...
WELL THEN, I'LL EXPLAIN TERASHIMA'S WILL FOR YOU BOTH
OH... YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER?
YEAH
KIND OF...
UH.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, DIDN'T YOU HIT ME ONCE?
MAYBE "KEN-CHAN" WAS THE "KEN" FROM KENJOU?

EVERY NIGHT I WOULD RUSH UP TO MY BEDROOM AS QUICK AS I COULD.
THE ANTI-SOCIAL MERMAID NEVER SMILED AT ANYONE BUT MY UNCLE.
HE'S A JUNIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL. THAT PUTS HIM THREE YEARS AHEAD OF YOU. DOESN'T IT?
HE LIVES NEARBY.
I CAN'T SWIM
WANNA SWIM?
HE WAS THE MERMAID FROM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT.
INSTANTLY I KNEW
THE SUMMER VACATION OF MY PREVIOUSLY ENJOYABLE FOURTEENTH YEAR STAGNATED A LITTLE BIT EACH TIME
AND WATCH MY UNCLE SNEAK DATE WITH THE MERMAID IN THE POOL.
IT WAS AS IF THEIR LIE SOILED MY HEART.
I CAN'T SWIM!
I STOPPED LETTING THEM HAVE THEIR LITTLE SECRET EVERY NIGHT, AND ENDED UP HITTING THE GUY OVER SOME TRIVIAL MATTER
YOU!! LIKE, STOP!

I HATE HIM! THAT JERK!
MR KASE
IS IT POSSIBLE TO WAIVE MY INHERITANCE?
YES OF COURSE IT'S POSSIBLE
THEN I WAIVE IT
MR. KENJOU, DON'T YOU WANT TO GIVE IT A LITTLE MORE THOUGHT?
IF IT'S THE INHERITANCE TAX YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT
YOU COULD ALWAYS SELL THE HOUSE
THERE'S NO REASON TO TAKE IT WE WERE FRIENDS BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER
OH, EXCUSE ME I'LL JUST TRY AND CALL HOME
IN THAT CASE, WE'LL NEED TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH EVERYONE
GEEZ, YOUZUKE
YOU CAN'T JUST GO AROUND SAYING YOU HATE PEOPLE
YOU PROBABLY DON'T UNDERSTAND IT YET
BUT "LOVE" OR "HATE" HIM,
YOU'RE LIKE HIS YOUNGER BROTHER
WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING AT HOME!?
YOU SAID WORK TODAY'S SATURDAY
IT'S JUST ME I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THE OTHER GUY SAID HE WANTS TO WAIVE THE INHERITENCE...!
EH KENJOU? A PERFECTLY ORDINARY PERSON

IF IT WERE THE LIFE OF MY DEAD BROTHER
MAYBE I WOULDN'T WANT TO KNOW EITHER
MAYBE MY FATHER IS AFRAID TO MEET THE STRANGER WHO'S SUPPOSED TO INHERIT ALL MY UNCLE'S THINGS. THIS AYUMI KENJOU...
THE TRUTH IS YOU DIDN'T INTEND TO COME FROM THE START!
DON'T YOU EVEN WANT TO SEE ANY OF THE THINGS YOUR UNKNOWN BROTHER LEFT BEHIND!?
AFTER THAT, I NEVER HEARD ANYTHING OF MY UNCLE
AT THE TIME, I COULDN'T SPEAK AND MY CHEST HURT...
WHEN SUMMER ENDED I FLED BACK TO MY HOME

KENJOU?
MR. TERASHIMA DESIGNATED THAT IT TAKE PLACE HERE SO...
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.
HOW DID IT GO?
SORRY IT SEEMS HE'S STILL BUSY AT WORK
HMM. WELL, WITH ONE OF THE PARTIES ABSENT, SHALL WE BREAK OFF FOR TODAY?
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU HERE...
I THOUGHT FOR SURE THE TWO OF YOU HAD ELOPED TO SOME FOREIGN COUNTRY TOGETHER.
WHAT HAPPENED SEVEN YEARS AGO?
DO YOU KNOW?
I DON'T KNOW IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH ME
DIDN'T YOU COME OVER EVERY DAY BACK THEN?
YOU AND MY UNCLE WERE
YOU TWO HAD THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP AND YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA?

PROBABLY CLEANED THE POOL AND PUT THE WATER IN IT TOO
IT WAS YOU THAT CLEANED THE APARTMENT AND PUT THE PHOTOS OUT WASN'T IT?
YOU THINK I'D WANT THIS HOUSE IF I KILLED MR. YÖ?
TAKE IT! HERE'S THE KEY
WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE IS FOR YOU TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO MY UNCLE
DON'T WAIVE YOUR INHERITANCE ISN'T IT ALRIGHT IF I DON'T WANT IT?
AH...
YOU TAKE IT!
IF YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT, THEN I CAN'T ACCEPT IT.
I JUST WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MY UNCLE'S DISAPPEARANCE
I DON'T MIND IF YOU TAKE IT. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL.
IT'S NOT MINE. TAKE IT ALREADY

HEY...!
SPLASH
COLD...!
THE WATER FEELS LIKE IT'S PIERCING MY BODY...

SPLSH
DON'T BE STUPID!
EHE HE
YOU TOLD ME ONCE YOU COULDN'T SWIM LIAR.
Shver
Shver
DON'T JOKE AROUND! I DIDN'T PUSH YOU HARD ENOUGH TO PUSH YOU OVER!
WHEN I HIT YOU THAT WAS PRETTY MEAN!
HUH?
Yo ok

SWISH
CLACK
...FOR THE TIME BEING WE CAN CHANGE INTO THESE
...WILL YOU STAY HERE TONIGHT?
IS THAT SCAR WHAT I SAW THAT LOOKED LIKE SCALES REFLECTED IN THE WATER AND THE LIGHT?
I'M IN A FAIRY TALE...
IT'S THE REMAINS OF A BURN I GOT WHEN I WAS A CHILD
A KETTLE ON THE STOVE FELL OVER ONTO ME

I KNOW, BUT I ASKED ANYWAY.
I'M NOT A CHILD ANYMORE
...MY HOUSE IS CLOSE
...IS IT THAT YOU LIKE MEN? IF THAT'S THE CASE THERE'S A BAR...
YOU DON'T WANT TO? NOT WITH ME?
EIGHT YEARS AGO, YOU IGNORED EVERYONE BUT MY UNCLE.
I UNDERSTOOD THE THINGS I DID, ALL EXCEPT HITTING YOU.
...WASN'T IT THAT YOU HATED ME?
...THAT'S RIGHT. EIGHT YEARS AGO,
YOU WERE A CHILD, TOO.

whoosh
AH...
YŌ...
click
whoosh

WEREN'T YOU CURIOUS?
A LOT?
IT HAPPENS A LOT...
GOOD YOU DON'T WORRY ABOUT NAMES

IT'S JUST MY FAULT FOR TAKING YOU UP ON YOUR INVITATION
WHEN YOU COME BACK TO YOUR SENSES, YOU MIGHT FREAK OUT...

clack
SEX IS NOT A TEST OF COURAGE.

WELL, I'M GOING HOME
HEY!!
DON'T GO! THIS WAS EXACTLY

SHIT...
MAYBE THIS IS REVENGE FOR EIGHT YEARS AGO...?

WHOOSH
WHOOSH
YŌ...
...UNBE-LIEVABLE
SEVEN YEARS LATER AND YOU STILL LOVE HIM!
I DIDN'T THINK MY UNCLE'S NAME WOULD BE THIS SHOCKING...
EH!? HE CAN'T COME TODAY, EITHER!?
SORRY, BUT MY FATHER'S STILL A LITTLE...
OH! EXCUSE US...
JUST WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
WERE YOU SLEEPING IN?
AH... S-SORRY

KENJOU, UM.
ABOUT YESTERDAY
AH, IT'S BETTER IF YOU FORGET ABOUT THAT...
...SO THAT'S IT
HE NEVER HAD ANY SERIOUS FEELINGS FOR ME
CRUSHED
BECAUSE OF NORMAL SEXUAL DESIRE...
CAN I ASK YOU?
ABOUT MY INVITATION LAST NIGHT...
WHY DID I ACCEPT?
HE IGNORED ME
NO MATTER HOW I CHATTED OR CAJOLED,
I HATE YOU, JERK!
HE IGNORED EVERYONE BUT UNCLE YO. I WAS JUST A CHILD TO HIM, AND WHEN I GOT ANGRY AT HIM...
I WANTED HIM TO PAY ATTENTION TO ME...
...HE'S STILL NOT HERE, HM?

...I'M SORRY MY FATHER AND MY UNCLE NEVER REALLY...
WELL, THEY'RE BOTH PRETTY STUBBORN, I GUESS
MY FATHER'S NEVER BEEN HERE, EVEN ONCE
...HAVEN'T YOU EVER ASKED YOUR FATHER?
HUH?
MR. KASE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF WORK MY UNCLE DID...?
WHAT I FIND CURIOUS IS HOW MY UNCLE BOUGHT SUCH A HUGE HOUSE WITH A POOL ATTACHED...
...WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL MR YO'S... WELL, BUSINESS, THAT IS TO SAY.
HE WORKED WITH A GROUP OF EMBEZZLERS
THE POLICE INVESTIGATED, BUT BECAUSE IT WAS ILLEGAL MONEY TO BEGIN WITH, NO ONE COULD FIND WHO'D MADE OFF WITH IT.
A GROUP OF...
WAS THERE SOME CONNECTION TO THE MOB?
WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY THAT, YES

I'M REALLY SORRY
OF COURSE IS IT OKAY IF WE CONTINUE THIS ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS, THEN?
HE'S STILL NOT HERE, HM? IN THAT CASE
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO, MR. KENJOU?
I HAVE TO GET TO WORK TOMORROW, SO
YOU'RE STAYING HERE AGAIN TONIGHT? WHAT ABOUT WORK?
OH NO, ACTUALLY I'M STILL IN COLLEGE
WELL THEN, EXCUSE ME
...WAS I THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE?

KENJOU PROBABLY KNEW IT ALL.
THE UNCLE I LOVED SO MUCH EMBEZZLED MONEY FOR THE MOB AND RAN OFF
I WAS THE ONLY IGNORANT CHILD...
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME!
THAT'S WHY WE DIDN'T HAVE THIS CONVERSATION RIGHT FROM THE START?
AND WE WERE ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN FROM SPEAKING TO HIM
YOU WERE EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO YÔ. WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT INFLUENCE HE'D HAVE ON YOU.
WE WERE HESITANT... AND THEN HE DIED,
AND WE THOUGHT THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO BE DONE ABOUT IT...

ACTUALLY, I JUST WANT TO SEE HIM...
見城
NOT HOME YET?
HELLO, MR. KAISE?
I'M SORRY, BUT COULD YOU TELL ME MR. KENJOU'S ADDRESS? I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE...
...OF COURSE EVEN IF HE IS HOME I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO SAY TO HIM.
IN THE END, MAYBE NO ONE WANTS TO RECOGNIZE MY UNCLE'S DEATH
HE COULD COULD THAW THAT ICEY MERMAID AT WILL.
MY UNCLE, WHO KEPT A MERMAID IN HIS POOL SO LONG AGO
WSH
POOSH
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS IN LOVE, AND I WAS STILL JEALOUS...

slurp
AH...
WOOSH
...
Rustle
yō!
yō!?
yō!
WOOSH

EVEN THE DEEPEST LOVE COOLS FAST.
GOOD-NESS,
...NEXT TIME, BRING SOMETHING TO CHANGE INTO...

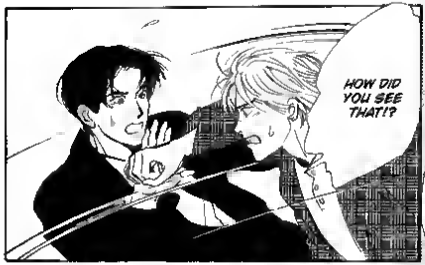
...IT'S YOU?

CLACK

...YOU'RE JUST THE SAME HEIGHT AS YÖ

PUMP
DON'T BE TRITE.

I THOUGHT HE HAD COME BACK...
I'M SORRY ABOUT YESTER-DAY
IT'S ALRIGHT FOR YOU, THAT HOUSE...
THERE'S NO REASON TO TAKE IT!
YOU JUST MISUNDER-STOOD SOME-THING
HE AND I DIDN'T HAVE THAT KIND OF RELATION-SHIP
IT WAS JUST... MY ONE-SIDED CRUSH
BUT I SAW HIM KISS YOU...
YOU SAW THAT!?
HE TOLD ME FLAT-OUT,
"YOU'RE LIKE A YOUNGER BROTHER."



"ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE HAVE THAT SEXUAL PREFERENCE, BUT I'M NOT ONE OF THEM," THAT'S WHAT HE SAID TO ME...

AND THEN, JUST THAT ONCE...

TO HIM, I WAS JUST SOME LOCAL BRAT!
HE WAS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE AND I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE
THE JERK GOT HIS HANDS ON SOME MONEY AND TOOK OFF WITHOUT ME EVER KNOWING A THING

WHEN YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT...
I'M SORRY I'M SO MUCH TROUBLE
...YOUR VOICE IS JUST LIKE HIS!
...IT'S SO STUPID! I'D FORGET IF I COULD...
THEN... THE OTHER NIGHT?
STOP!
IDIOT...!
DON'T BE STUPID

HE WAS DRUNK AND GOT VIOLENT
...IT WAS MY FATHER

I'D FAKE BEING SICK AND SKIP SWIM CLASS, AND THEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT I'D GO SWIMMING IN THE SEA
IT DIDN'T LOOK SO BAD BACK THEN, BUT
WHEN I WAS A KID, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT
HEY, KID WHAT ARE YOU DOING BY YOURSELF?
I'VE GOT A POOL, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE I LIKE THE OCEAN BETTER.
IF IT'S ALRIGHT STOP BY
YŌ WAS ACTUALLY A REALLY GOOD SWIMMER...
HE WAS CHEERFUL AND LOVED TO JOKE AROUND LIKE AN IDIOT BUT HE WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON IN THE WATER.
LIKE A FRIGHTENINGLY BEAUTIFUL FISH...
I WONDERED IF MERMAIDS WERE LIKE THAT...

MAYBE WE WERE TWO OF A KIND.
TWO FISH WHO COULD ONLY BE FREE IN THE WIDE OCEAN
YOU GOT BIG SO FAST, AND YOUR VOICE CHANGED SO MUCH I HARDLY RECOGNIZE IT
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS YOU STAYING HERE
STAYING OUT ALL NIGHT, ARE WE?
click

WHY THE LOOK? SHOULD I NOT BE ALIVE?
YOU'RE ALIVE!?
UNCLE YO—?
—LAST NIGHT'S CALL TO MY BROTHER
NOW, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL NIGHT?
I DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT IF I MADE SOME CONTACT DURING THE PROCEEDINGS. SO I CAME BACK JUST TO SEE THE SITUATION AT FIRST
I COULDN'T LET THEM FIND ME THOUGH, SO I HAD TO MOVE AT NIGHT
I WOULD'VE COME BACK RIGHT AWAY, BUT IT WASN'T SAFE UNTIL THEY DECLARED ME DEAD
THAT WAS YOU, HUH? I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU FROM THAT VOICE
—UM, THAT THIEF—

I SPOKE WITH THE LAWYER HERE LAST NIGHT
I WAS JUST WAITING FOR YOU
UNCLE,
WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE KENJOU WITH YOU?
YOU MET KEN-CHAN RIGHT? YOU TWO STILL FRIENDS?
NOT EXACTLY IT'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS
HE SAID HE DIDN'T CARE
BUT IT DIDN'T LOOK TO ME LIKE YOU TWO HAD AN "I DON'T CARE" KIND OF RELATIONSHIP
HE THINKS YOU THREW HIM AWAY
LOOK
A TATTOO
THAT'S ONLY NATURAL, I SUPPOSE
I REALLY DID THINK HE WAS CUTE
TO ME IF WE BOTH ENDED UP ON THE RUN, THE ONE WHO WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TAKE IT IS ME

CAN ONLY BE FREE IN THE WIDE OCEAN
A FRIGHTENINGLY BEAUTIFUL FISH...
BUT IF I BROUGHT HIM ALONG...
HIS LIFE WOULD'VE BEEN OVER
A CHILD ABUSED BY HIS PARENTS IS USUALLY FEARFUL OF ADULTS,
BUT INSTEAD HE WANTED A FATHER FIGURE IN ME
...SOOO, YOU WERE WITH KEN-CHAN LAST NIGHT?
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT END UP LIKE THIS SOME DAY
I WAS ONLY THERE TO BRING YOU TWO TOGETHER
WELL THEN...
IF YOU DON'T GO TALK TO KENJOU,
I'M GOING TO BEAT THE HELL OUT OF YOU
I CAN'T BE IN THE PUBLIC EYE, BUT HERE'S MY CURRENT ADDRESS
WELL, I'M BEING WATCHED SO I BETTER LEAVE QUIETLY
UNCLE!

HOW'VE YOU BEEN, KEN-CHAN?
SORRY, WE'LL HAVE TO GET MARRIED NEXT TIME
THAT DECLARATION OF DEATH MAKES THINGS A LITTLE DIFFICULT...
BUT, OF COURSE THE HOUSE IS YOURS
THE TAXES AND THINGS SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH...
IN HONOR OF OUR MEMORIES
I CAN'T TAKE IT... THERE'S NO REASON TO GIVE IT TO ME!

A MEMORIAL GIFT
TO MY EX-BOYFRIEND
IS IT ALRIGHT LIKE THAT?
I TRULY WAS FOND OF YOU
I'M SORRY
UNCLE

GIVE ME THAT MERMAID
HE PUT WATER IN THE POOL AND WAITED FOR HIS MISSING FISH
RELEASE THE CAPTIVE MERMAID ONCE MORE INTO THE WIDE OCEAN
PLEASE
IN SOME WAYS, HE'S SUCH A FRAGILE PERSON

IF IT'S CLEAR TOMORROW, WANT TO GO FOR A DRIVE?
I RENTED A CAR — YOU COULD SHOW ME THE SHORE
WELL THAT'S BIZARRE —
WASN'T OUR RELATIONSHIP PURELY PHYSICAL?
YOU THINK I'D COMMUTE TWO HOURS ON A WEEKEND JUST FOR THAT?
THAT'S SOME CONFIDENCE YOU'VE GOT
HEY, WAIT!
YEAH, THAT EVENING PAPER
MAYBE SOMEDAY, THE UNSMILING MERMAID
HEY, DID I SAY I WASN'T SATISFIED?
HEY — WAIT UP!
WILL WAIT FOR ME

❖ End ❖

今市子

PROFILE

BORN 4/11
SIGN ARIES
BLOOD AB TYPE
RESIDENCE TOKYO

All my friends who knew I was working on this book were surprised, and said to me, "That manga you never got released, it was this one!?" It used to be, and its dark past was that bad...

もえぱコミックス

WARAWANAI NINGYO ICHIKO-IMA

笑わない人魚

今市子

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今市子

INFERNAL if COMICS

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INFERNAL if COMICS

Gem-like stories, flowing from a hidden box. Finally put down in comic form, the world of Imx Ichiko is gathered in this anthology.

The Unsmiling Mermaid
My uncle bought a house with a specially attached pool in a seaside town and kept a mermaid there—

Aobuge's Friend
"Ah the children's tale of Peeot. The story of a man who makes and then kills a series of rich women

Mid-Summer Castle
For my father's funeral I visited my hometown after ten years. That hotel I'd admired I'd forgotten all about it—

The Solitude of Migratory Fish
There's a man I've had on my mind for a long time. You know he wears a watch on both his right and his left arms—

WARAWANAI NINGYO
ICHIKO-IMA

インファナルコミックス COMICS あおば出版

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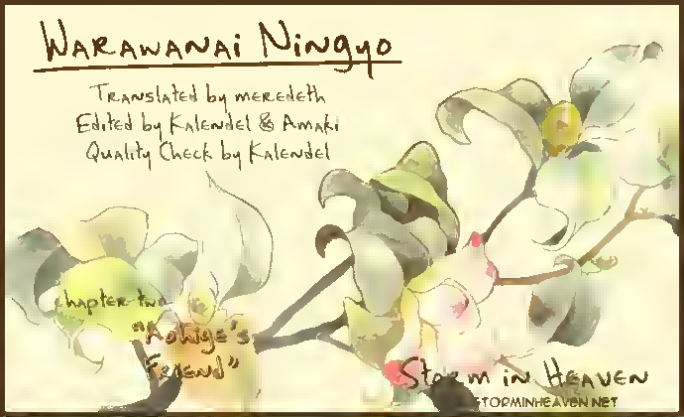
Quality Check by Kalendel



Aohige's Friend

I GOT MARRIED FOR THE FIRST TIME WHEN I WAS TWENTY-THREE
SHE WAS A BUSINESS WOMAN SIXTEEN YEARS OLDER THAN ME

"I ALWAYS WORK ALONE AND I NEVER GOT MARRIED"
"SO PLEASE DON'T REFUSE"
"I'LL DIE ALONE AND SAD"
SHE HAD CANCER, AND HAD BEEN GIVEN SIX MONTHS TO LIVE

MY SECOND WIFE WAS HEALTHY AND WEALTHY, AND AN ONLY CHILD
SHE WAS CAUGHT IN A PILE-UP ON THE HIGHWAY AND DIED

MY THIRD WIFE WAS JUST A NORMAL WOMAN. BUT
IT WASN'T HALF A YEAR BEFORE SHE DROWNED IN THE SEA OF SAIPAN.
SOMEHOW I ENDED UP WITH 150 MILLION IN INSURANCE MONEY

I BUILT MY FORTUNE WITH THREE MARRIAGES AND THREE DEAD WIVES
THESE DAYS, I'M CALLED AOHIGE BY MY FRIENDS.
"Aohige literally means Pale Moustache."

KAKU—
click
KAKU NINO-MIYA?
HE'S OUT AT THE MOMENT BUT...
UMM, EXCUSE ME
WHO'S HE?
YES?
I'LL WHIP SOME-THING UP, SO HOLD ON JUST A MINUTE
UH
COME IN...
CAN I MAKE YOU SOME-THING?
Is it ready?
YO, DID AO-CHAN SHOW?
BANG

WELCOME HOME
IT'S BEEN FOREVER, HUH
WHAT! WHAT'S WITH THE DIRTY MOUSTACHE!? WHAT ABOUT "AOHIGE"!?
BUH..!
WHEN I WENT TO THE STORE WITH THIS SHIRO-CHAN AND EVERYBODY THOUGHT YOU'D BE DELIGHTED
IT'S A JOKE A JOKE
NOBODY CALLS YOU AOKE ANYMORE
WELL, I JUST CAME TO INVITE YOU OVER
WILL YOU BE EATING TOO, MR NINOMIYA?
HUH?
...YOUR "LITTLE FRIEND"?
THEN CAN I?
...NO!
MR NINOMIYA!
...YOU DON'T JUST SAY "I'LL EAT NOW"! WHAT KIND OF MEAL DID YOU JUST RANDOMLY MAKE!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU
I SAID TO STAY OUT UNTIL I GOT BACK

SLAM
WHAT THE ...? WHAT IF I'M A CUST-OMER?
THAT WAS A MEAN THING TO DO
THIS IS DELI-CIOUS
...NAH, HE HAD IT COMING. THAT BRAT'LL GET BY ONE WAY OR THE NEXT...
IT'S A MILLION YEN. WE HAVE NO USE FOR POOR PEOPLE!
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL CRUEL
TURNS OUT THE DUMBASS WANTED ME TO MAKE A FAKE PASS-PORT FOR HIM.
MAKING THE REAL THING IS EASIER
KAKU
HERE... I WAS THINKING YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
YOU HAVE TO EAT PRO-PERLY
THAT AND THIS... HM...
IT'S ALRIGHT, JUST LIKE THAT.
THE INSURANCE MONEY MIGHT BE A NO GO
THE PERSON AT THE INSURANCE COMPANY SAID THEY WERE STILL INVESTI-GATING
THEY'VE PROBABLY GOT SOME DOUBTS ABOUT THE CAUSE OF DEATH

ARE YOU SERIOUS?
DO I SEEM LIKE A MARRIAGE SWINDLER?
YOU STILL HAVEN'T GOTTEN THE INSURANCE MONEY AFTER ALL
YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT TO LOOK AT HIM, HUH? IT'S THE MOUSTACHE
IS THAT RIGHT? AMAZING
THIS MAN IS SOMEONE WHO KILLED HIS WIFE FOR THE MONEY
BECAUSE IT'S THE THIRD ONE
I'D HAVE TO BE SERIOUSLY DENSE
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha
SMILE, HUH! EVEN IF YOU'RE SAD FOR THE MOMENT
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOU SHOWED YOUR FACE WE WERE WORRIED
DYING ALONE IS ENOUGH TO GO THROUGH BY ITSELF

I'M HOME, TOMOKO.
KAORU
JUNKO
EVERYONE'S ALREADY DIED—?
JEEZ
—THE WOMEN ARE ALREADY TAKEN CARE OFF.
IF HE CAN MAKE THAT STRANGE BUSINESS OF HIS WORK
I SHOULD LIVE WITH KAKU. HUH?
I COME
WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SORRY BUT I'VE GOT CUSTOMERS COMIN—
YOU SAID IT WAS A MILLION

EH?
I GOT IT
I HAVE TWO
HEH...
JUST WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS!
ME BUSINESS IS GOOD. HUH?
EXCUSE
AH— COME IN!
STARE
WHAT'S WITH THE KID?
AH— MY NEW PART-TIMER
MOVE!
QUICK, GO GET SOMETHING HUSTLE!

KAWA?
WITH THESE CHINESE-MADE AND CONVERTED MODELS THE SITUATION'S DIFFERENT.
I'LL GO OVERSEAS TO BUY DIRECTLY.
CLICK
HE TENDS TO BE A MANIAC
CLICK
I'VE GOT ONE CARTRIDGE FOR YOU
YOU SHOULD BE MORE DILIGENT.
OF COURSE NOT! ONLY TO MR. SAN-WAKA!
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TALKING TO THE YAMAMURA GROUP, HAVE YOU?
BECAUSE IF KANA CAN'T TRUST YOU—
HEY, IS NI-NOMIYA HERE?
EH?
UH, FROM THE YAMA-MURA GROUP!
YOU— YOU WERE PLAYING BOTH SIDES!
SAN-WAKA!
HEY KID—!!
GET OUT THROUGH THE BACK!

EEK!
BANG
NINOMIYA, YOU!
UWAAGH--
STOP, SANSHITA! DON'T TAKE IT OUT IN THIS KIND OF PLACE!
WHAT KIND OF EVIL GOD ARE YOU!
JUST RUIN AL-READY!
SORRY FOR THE BOTHER, BUT CAN YOU PUT US UP HERE FOR A WHILE?
AO-CHAN.

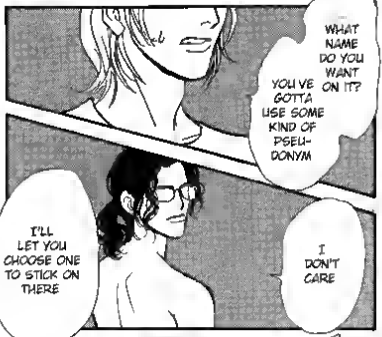
WHAT HAPPENED?
A CONFLICT WITH A CUSTOMER
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BRAT...
AOHIGE...?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, ANYWAY?
... HARUHIKO.
MINE'S AOIKE.
YOU CAN CALL ME AO-CHAN OR AOHIGE, THOUGH.
PRETTY, ISN'T SHE?
THIS IS MY FIRST WIFE TOMOKO
SHE HAD PANCREATIC CANCER, AND WAS TOLD SHE HAD SIX MONTHS LEFT TO LIVE.
SHE WAS PRESIDENT OF HER COMPANY'S CUSTOMER RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
"SO PLEASE, DON'T REFUSE."
"I'LL LEAVE YOU HALF MY FORTUNE."
"I WANT TO LIVE MY REMAINING TIME AS SOMEONE'S LOVE."
SHE WAS A STRONG WOMAN, BUT...

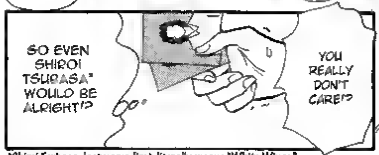
SHE WAS A WOMAN WHO BELIEVED SHE COULD WARD OFF MISFORTUNE AND ONCOMING CARS.
SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE PRESIDENT OF A REAL-ESTATE FIRM
THIS IS MY SECOND WIFE KAORU
"DID YOU TAKE YOUR MEDICINE?" "HOW ARE YOU FEELING?" SHE DIDN'T HAVE EVEN ONE RELATIVE TO ASK THINGS LIKE THAT,
AND SHE WAS ACHING WITH LONELINESS
SHE MADE PLANS TO TRAVEL TO SAIPAN BY HERSELF, AND MADE IT THERE FINE. BUT THEN THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT.
THIS ONE, AGAIN, HALF A YEAR...
MY THIRD WIFE JUNKO
LIKE THE TALE OF PEROT
THE STORY OF A MAN WHO MARRIED AND THEN KILLED OFF A SERIES OF RICH WOMEN
THE TALE OF... AOHIGE?
I WANTED THE MONEY SO I MARRIED HER, BUT IT WAS A HEAVY EXPERIENCE THE... PAIN IS TERRIBLE
WE ARE DEFINITELY ONE SHORT...
DAMMIT. MAYBE IT GOT LEFT IN THE APARTMENT? OR WE DROPPED IT ON THE WAY OVER?
IF I HID, I WOULDN'T BE STAGGERING AROUND LIKE THIS.
DID YOU KILL THEM?

knock knock
...WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING HERE?
I TOOK CARE OF IT ALREADY. GO HOME
I can see myself having all sorts of problems with this boy
WASN'T THAT WAS YOUR PARENTS' MONEY? YOU STOLE IT FROM HOME
IT'S MONEY I EARNED
...I'VE GOT THE ID PHOTOS AS PROMISED. NOW GIVE ME THE PASSPORT
MY FATHER SAID I SHOULD MAKE MY OWN POCKET CHANGE AND HE BOUGHT ME SOME STOCK AS A GIFT
I MANAGED IT MYSELF. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO WHATEVER I WANT WITH THAT MONEY
...IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY!
ARE YOU GAY?
...WHAT!?
WHAT KIND OF... WHAT IF I AM!?

LOVE
WAIT— WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
Hello?
YOU CAN DO WITH ME AS YOU LIKE
THIS IS A JOKE, RIGHT! YOU'RE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL!!
ARE YOU THE TYPE TO AVOID VIRGINS BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO MUCH TROUBLE?
I'M NOT GOING TO SLEEP WITH A CHILD!
TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF, BOY!
HAVE SOME AMBITION!
AMBITION!?
THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT!!
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO FOR YOU! YOU DON'T WANT MY MONEY, YOU DON'T WANT MY BODY, SO WHAT!?

I WANT TO GO OVERSEAS AND LIVE FREELY!
SO I'M GOING TO CHANGE MY NAME, THROW AWAY MY PAST, AND BECOME SOMEONE ELSE. BECOME PURE AND WHITE!
I'M GOING TO LIVE HOWEVER I WANT!
I'M USELESS HERE!
IF YOU JUST WANT TO RUN AWAY FROM HOME YOU DON'T NEED TO GO INTERNATIONAL
AND IT'S POLICY NOT TO HAVE ANY RELATIONS WITH CHILDREN
AH...
IS THAT RIGHT!?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LIKE THAT YOU DROPPED SOMETHING EARLIER
I'LL JUST KEEP TRACK OF IT FOR YOU, HUH? UNTIL YOU CAN GET ME THAT PASSPORT.
YOU ?
GIVE IT BACK! DAMN BRAT...!
I ALREADY HID IT SOMEWHERE





*Shiroi Tsubasa, last name first, literally means "White Wings."

I'LL EXCHANGE IT FOR A PASSPORT.
I CAN PLAY YOUR GAME, TOO.
UNTIL YOU CAN GET AHOLD OF IT I'LL JUST STICK CLOSE TO YOU AND KEEP MY EYES PEELED.

THERE'S NOTHING HERE
DOESN'T HE EVER GO SHOPPING?
IF THIS IS IT, THOUGH I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO...
IT'S NICE TO SEE A BOY THAT AGE WHO'S SUCH A GOOD COOK
AND RELIABLE, TOO
Rich, and spoiled?
HE'S A COMPLETELY SPOILED RICH KID
HIS PARENTS HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY STOCK FOR KIDS WHO CAN'T EVEN WALK YET
And how to handle a disturbing incident...
I DON'T INTEND TO GET MARRIED AGAIN, SO
IF IT'S ALRIGHT, YOU COULD COME LIVE HERE WITH ME
WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR SO LONG WE'VE LEARNED ALL OF EACH OTHER'S HABITS
SORRY
WE NEED TO STAY TWO OR THREE DAYS.
NAH...
SUPER COOL!
I DID INVITE YOU OVER, AFTER ALL
THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL, BUT,
YOU AND I, WELL, WE'VE GOT DIFFERENT IDEAS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE TOGETHER

IT WOULDN'T GO WELL. I'M SURE OF IT...
...NO GOOD?
BESIDES, I'M NOT THAT CLOSE TO DEATH.
THE TWO OF YOU DON'T MIND SHARING A ROOM, RIGHT?
DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF TOO HARD TRYING TO RESIST ME.
YOU'RE WELCOME AT ANY TIME.
OH
I SAID NOT CLOSE TO DEATH.
He's so ignorant of people's feelings.

WHO WOULD WANT A RAT LIKE YOU...
SEX WITH YOU IS SIMPLY NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!
IF IT'S LIKE THAT, MAKE SURE TO COME OVER AND TEACH ME

ISHI-KAWA!
YOU DON'T WORK AT ALL, AND YOU CAN STILL AFFORD A HOUSE LIKE THIS I'M JEALOUS
SINCE JUNKO DIED, I HAVEN'T HAD THE AMBITION TO WORK...
DID YOU GET THE INSURANCE MONEY ALREADY?
NO
FIGURES
A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION IN INSURANCE ON JUST A HOUSEWIFE THAT'S NOT NORMAL
THERE'S THREE HUNDRED MILLION ON JUST ME!
MIGHT BE CAMOUFLAGE
JUNKO COULDN'T SWIM
THIS STORY THAT SHE WAS DRUNK AND FELL OFF THE PIER INTO THE SEA AT NIGHT. ALONE... NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, IT'S ODD.
BUT I WAS IN JAPAN AT THE TIME
BEER
YOU HEAR IT ALL THE TIME. A JAPANESE PERSON, KILLING PEOPLE FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY IN THE PHILIPPINES

YOU COULD HAVE HIRED SOMEONE.
YEAH MAYBE THE AT THE SAI-PAN PRO-FESSIONAL KILLERS STORE?
THIS ISN'T ENOUGH, YOU KNOW
YOU'RE SUCH A BULLY
WELL THEN, TAKE IT EASY
I'LL COME AGAIN WE CAN REMINISCE ABOUT JUNKO, HUH?

*Magazine title: Fun Mania

IF WE SAY IT'S A VECTOR MODEL ZBB,
WE WON'T HAVE TO CONVERT ANYTHING THEY'RE CHINESE-MADE SO... EH? SANWAKAI'S SENT OUT A CIRCULAR ON US?
WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THE APARTMENT FOR THE TIME BEING... THINGS ARE JUST A WRECK
WHAT IS IT...? IF YOU'RE THINKING YOU SHOULD GO HOME BECAUSE OF THAT MAN...
I'M ONLY GOING BACK FOR A CHANGE OF CLOTHES.
YOU'RE NOT A RUNAWAY... THEN?
HERE HAVE YOUR STUPID MONEY BACK
BUT THIS...
PAY ME WHEN YOU GET YOUR GOODS
I'M NOT GIVING YOU ANY KIND OF GUARANTEE, THOUGH
THAT'S ALRIGHT
Really?
I'LL JUST TURN YOU IN, AND WHEN YOU'RE ARRESTED HERE,
THERE'LL BE TROUBLE FOR AOIKE, TOO.
GOAT...!

WHY, JUNKO...?
...JUNKO,
WHY ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE STILL ALIVE?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WHY AREN'T YOU DEAD?
I DIED, SO WHY DIDN'T YOU...
WHY...?
OH...
STILL AWAKE?
WHY ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE WHO CONTINUES TO LIVE...?

IF YOU DO GET A PASSPORT... WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?
I HAVEN'T REALLY DECIDED YET, BUT SOUTH-EAST ASIA... THE PHILLIPINES THAILAND, MAYBE
AS SOON AS I GET MY PASSPORT FROM NINOMIYA, I'LL BE GONE...
SORRY... I... I KNOW I'M TROUBLE
THAT'S OKAY YOU CAN STAY
YOUR MAKING THE MEALS IS A BIG HELP.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU WANT AN ESCAPE FROM REALITY.
...A LEVEL-HEADED KID LIKE YOU AND YOU HAVEN'T DECIDED YOUR DESTINATION YET?
I SAY OLDER BROTHER, BUT HE WAS MY HALF-BROTHER. THE SON OF MY FATHER'S LEGAL WIFE. I NEVER EVEN MET HIM, BUT STILL
...RECENTLY, MY OLDER BROTHER KILLED HIMSELF.
REALLY, ANYWHERE WOULD BE FINE JUST NOT JAPAN
WHEREVER I GO WHEN I GET THERE, IT WON'T JUST BE AN ESCAPE. I INTEND TO KEEP LIVING

HIS WIFE WAS JUST UPSET.
"YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN THE ONE TO DIE...!"
SO I WENT TO THE FUNERAL BY MYSELF.
MY MOTHER WAS KEPT AS A MISTRESS OUT OF A SENSE OF DUTY.
"I WAS KILLED AND NOW I'M DENIED MY EXISTENCE...!"
BECAUSE THEY ALL KNEW SHE WAS AT LEAST HALF SERIOUS.
NOT SURPRISING, I SUPPOSE IT WAS A SUICIDE, AFTER ALL.
EVEN THOUGH THEY'VE GOT A DAUGHTER NOW
LIKE AN IDIOT, HE WANTS ME TO BE HIS HEIR
...THEN MY FATHER ADOPTED ME IN MY BROTHER'S PLACE, AND,
MY MOTHER'S IN A PANIC THAT MY FATHER CAN GET RID OF HER LEGITIMATELY NOW.
EVERYONE THERE UNDERSTOOD IT WAS JUST AN ANGRY OUTBURST AND SHE WASN'T A HUNDRED PERCENT SERIOUS.
AT LEAST HIS WIFE WOULD BE HAPPY
MAYBE IF I TAKE OVER MY FATHER'S COMPANY AND RUIN IT.
...NO ONE HAS ANY HOPE. NO ONE'S HAPPY.

IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I DIDN'T EXIST.
AS LONG AS I'M HERE, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING.
I WANT A CLEAN SLATE.
BUT I'LL BECOME A DIFFERENT PERSON. SOMEONE WHO HAS NOTHING, AND I'LL GO TO ANOTHER COUNTRY, WHERE NO ONE KNOWS ME
IF IT'S FOR THE SAKE OF LIVING FREELY
I KNOW I CAN DO ANYTHING
WITH TWO MILLION
CAN'T YOU JUST BUY WINGS OF FREEDOM?
HEY!
SOLD IT?
YEAH. IT WAS A BARGAIN SALE, TOO I CRIED !

THE PASS-PORT
WHY NOT?
BUT IF WE KEPT IT HERE IT'D BE DANGE-ROUS CAN'T BE HELPED
I DON'T WANT THAT RAT'S WE-AKNESS TO GET ME ARRESTED
YOU SHOULD GIVE IT TO HIM
THAT'S EASY TO SAY
HE JUST CAN'T HANDLE THAT MUCH RESPON-SIBILITY
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO GET ANY-THING
I CAN'T DO BUSINESS WITH AN AMATEUR KID FOR A PARTNER
NEVERMIND HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO TRACK US
EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE WINGS, FLYING'S NOT THAT SIMPLE
EVENTU-ALLY HE'LL UNDER-STAND
IT'S JUST THE SAME AS BEING IN JAPAN
IT'S ONLY THE SCENERY THAT CHANGES WHEREVER YOU ARE. IT'S STILL YOU THAT'S THERE
YOU CAN'T JUST BECOME SOMEONE ELSE
AN ILLU-SION

A GUY WHO CAN FLY ALL THE WAY TO JAPAN CAN FLY... BUT...
HE IS PRETTY, THOUGH, ISN'T HE!
...WHAT!? HE'S ALREADY 180 CM TALL, AND HE'S STILL GROWING!
Your taste is outrageous
GALLERY
THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN ALRIGHT BY YOU UNTIL NOW...
WHAT'S UP, HM?
INSTIGATOR!
A MAN KNOWN AS AOHIGE DUE TO HIS VERY PALE MOUSTACHE
MARRIED A RICH YOUNG WOMAN
AOHIGE GAVE HIS YOUNG BRIDE A KEY RING,
AND, TELLING HER THAT THE ONLY DOOR SHE WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO OPEN WAS THAT TO HIS FIRST WIFE'S ROOM, HE LEFT ON A TRIP.

WOAH ...!
THE ONLY DOOR SHE WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO OPEN
BUT THE WIFE WAS OVERCOME WITH CURIOSITY AND OPENED THE DOOR...
THERE SHE FOUND THE DEAD BODIES OF AOHIGE'S FIRST SIX WIVES DANGLING FROM THE CEILING
Aohige
drop
JUNKO?
HIS THIRD WIFE'S
A JAPANESE PERSON KILLING PEOPLE FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY OVERSEAS
"INSURANCE POLICY OF ONE HUNDRED FIFTY MILLION ON A FULL-TIME HOUSE WIFE"
"INVESTIGATION REPORT"
"SUSUMU ISHIKAWA HAD A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS JUNKO FOR TEN YEARS"
"ISHIKAWA LOST LARGE SUMS OF BORROWED MONEY ON HORSE RACES"
THIS MAN CAME HERE YESTERDAY...
HOW MANY YEARS HAVE WE HEARD THAT SAME THING THERE'S NO WAY—

BUT...
THIS IS EXACTLY THE STORY AS HEARD FROM AOIKE HIMSELF
THERE'S NO KILLER WHO DO THAT
FIRST OFF DOING IT THREE TIMES IN A ROW IS BEYOND COINCIDENCE
CANCER, A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, AND DROWNING
Aohige
AO-CHAN
DON'T FALL ASLEEP ON THE COUCH YOU'LL CATCH A COLD
THERE'S NO WAY RIGHT?
HAVE
KAKU...
YOU COULD COME LIVE HERE WITH ME

WHAT'S YOUR CONNECTION TO AOIKE?
DO YOU REALLY THINK AOIKE KILLED HIS WIFE?
NO WAY!
HE'S NOT EVEN CAPABLE OF STUFF LIKE THAT
HARUHIKO
WHERE ARE YOU SNEAKING OFF TO?
Sorry...
sneak
IT WAS SO SUDDEN, THOUGH SO OF COURSE I REFUSED.
BECAUSE SHE ONLY HAD SIX MONTHS TO LIVE, SHE WANTED TO ATONE FOR WHAT SHE'D DONE
AO-CHAN'S FIRST WIFE
TOMOKO NINOMIYA, GAVE BIRTH TO ME AT SEVENTEEN AND ABANDONED ME.
THERE WAS THIS MAN WATCHING OVER HER WHO LOOKED LIKE A YOUNG SWALLOW
WHEN THEY SAID SHE WAS IN CRITICAL CONDITION AND I WENT TO SEE HER,
AND LITTLE BY LITTLE I GOT ATTACHED TO HIM. I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE THAT HE WAS A FRAUD.
WHEN SHE DIED, HE JUST SOBBED AND SOBBED,
SO WHEN HE TURNED OUT TO BE SUCH A STUPIDLY DEVOTED PERSON, I WAS SHOCKED
IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS JUST THERE TO COLLECT HER MONEY

BACK THEN... THE TWO OF US EACH GOT HALF HER INHERITANCE
AND WE SHARED THE BIGGER STUFF.
...SINCE THEN... I'VE BEEN THERE TO CONSOLE AO-CHAN EACH TIME HIS WIFE DIED...
WHEN YOU SAY CONSOLE...?
WHAT A JERK! EVEN IF THERE HAD BEEN SOME KIND OF PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP, IT WOULD'VE BEEN OVER A LONG TIME AGO!
WE WERE NEVER LIKE THAT!
BESIDES...
WHAT DO YOU CALL IT WHEN WHAT YOU SHARE IS DEATH?
YOU PUT UP A GOOD ACT BUT YOU LIKE HIM, RIGHT?
AOIKE KNOWS IT AND YOU STILL GET ALONG?
WELL, THAT...
THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS. AO-CHAN HAS NO IDEA.
JUST SEX DOESN'T MAKE IT LOVE
I CAN WAIT AS LONG AS IT TAKES
HEY...

I'LL MAKE SURE IT FEELS GOOD
THE VIRGIN PART, TOO HUH? DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE GENTLE
I'LL ADMIT THAT MUCH BUT STILL...
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THAT PASSION FROM THE OTHER NIGHT? WAS IT JUST A BLUFF?
HEY WAIT...
UH WAIT
"THE ONLY DOOR SHE WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO OPEN."
"WAS THAT OF HIS FIRST WIFE'S ROOM."
....WHAT IS IT THIS EARLY IN THE MORNING?
DING DONG
DING DONG

SORRY FOR THE EARLY HOUR. ARE YOU KOUICHIROU AOIKE?
WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE DEATH OF YOUR WIFE, JUNKO AOIKE. WE NEED YOU TO COME WITH US.
SIX O' CLOCK?
WHO IS IT?
IT'S THE POLICE
I UNDERSTAND
I NEED TO CHANGE, SO WAIT HERE JUST A MINUTE
KAKU...!
WE'VE GOTTA GO! THE POLICE ARE DOWNSTAIRS RIGHT NOW!

HARU-HIKO, YOU TOO!
HURRY UP AND GET READY!
GET OUT QUIETLY THROUGH THE BACK DOOR
NO... NOT YET. ANYWAY... SOONER OR LATER, THOUGH, THEY'LL SEARCH THE HOUSE.
TO ARREST YOU!?
YOU'D BETTER NOT BE HERE
THIS IS NO GOOD YOU'VE GOTTA COME WITH US!
AO-CHAN!
THE POLICE MUST HAVE SOMETHING. THIS IS NO GOOD.
EXCUSE ME.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
THEY'RE GUARDING THE BACK DOOR, TOO

YOU TWO GET OUT OF HERE...NOW!
BUH ?
UH
QUICKLY! GET GOING!
FREEZE!
...AND KEEP QUIET!
THAT'S MY ?
"THE ONLY DOOR SHE WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO OPEN..."
"WAS THAT OF HIS FIRST WIFE'S ROOM ?"
...A VECTOR MODEL 288
THAT'S WHAT HE CALLED THIS!

GOOD— THEY DON'T SEEM TO HAVE BEEN HERE YET
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME.
AT ANY RATE, WE SHOULD CHANGE OUR CLOTHES, AND YOU SHOULD SHAVE THAT MOUSTACHE. IT'S SO OBVIOUS.
AH— AH— AH...
YOU JUST SIT BACK AND LET ME DO THAT.
WHERE SHOULD WE GO?
WE'VE GOT MONEY AND FORGED PASS-PORTS.
THERE ALL CLEAN
IT'S ALRIGHT— I'M STAYING WITH YOU
SOME-HOW WE'LL MAKE IT
—LIAR—

KILLERS START OFF AS LIARS
AOIKE WAS IN JAPAN WHEN HIS WIFE DIED IN SAIPAN. SO HE HAS AN ALIBI, BUT HE COULD HAVE ASKED YOU TO DO IT FOR HIM, NINOMIYA.
You get out of that situation pretty easily.
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU DIDN'T KILL ANYONE?
YOU IDIOT! YOU ASK DID HE KILL ANYBODY, AND THE GUY'S SUPPOSED TO SAY YES?
HARUHIKO...
YOU HAD A FALSE PASSPORT SO THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY RECORD OF IT.
BUT IF YOU WERE PHOTOGRAPHED WHILE YOU WERE THERE, THE TRUTH MIGHT LEAK OUT
I ASKED KAKU TO DO IT!
NO!
HE JUST SAID TO STO[illegible] HER!
AO-CHAN DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT KILLING HER.
YOU KILLED HER TO GET THE INSURANCE MONEY
AND YET YOU STILL TALK SUCH A BIG GAME...

THE PLAN WAS JUST TO GET CLOSE TO HER FOR HER FORTUNE
I THOUGHT EVEN IF THEY DID FALL IN LOVE, I WOULDN'T MIND BUT...
ISHIKAWA HAD MONEY TROUBLE, AND HE GOT IT IN HIS HEAD TO KILL HER FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY, SO HE BOUGHT SOME INSURANCE ON HIMSELF AS CAMOUFLAGE
HE WENT TO SAIPAN ALONE TO MAKE THE PREPARATIONS...
WHILE HE WAS THERE, HE HIRED SOMEONE
TRUTHFULLY, THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO KILL AO-CHAN
EVEN IF I HAD STOPPED IT...
SOMEDAY, HE WOULD'VE THOUGHT UP SOME OTHER WAY TO GET RID OF HER.
SOMEHOW
I COULDN'T ALLOW AO-CHAN TO BE BETRAYED AGAIN
CLATTER
I GOT HER DRUNK AND PUSHED HER IN, AND SHE SANK LIKE A ROCK...
...AND SO THE TWO OF YOU SHARED THE INSURANCE MONEY AGAIN
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP! IF YOU CAN CALL IT THAT...

Truly a sad sight to see a young boy disillusioned
HARU!
KAKU
clack clack clack
...HOW DISAPPOINTING...
WE'VE GOT TO HURRY, TOO
...AO-CHAN, LET'S GO.
FRAUDS AND MURDERERS... WORTHLESS
WHERE TO?
WHEN DO WE STOP RUNNING?

EVEN IF THE COPS DON'T KNOW ABOUT K□KU YET, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME.
I DRAGGED KAKU INTO IT, AND COMMITTED MURDER...
IF I END IT ON MY OWN,
KAKU WILL BE FREE...

Crash
AO-CHAN!?
YOU IDIOT! WHAT! WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT DO!?
AO-CHA
DON'T LEAVE ME HERE BY MYSELF!
...N?
...A MODEL GUN?
HARU-HIKO...
SWITCHED IT OUT...
AO...

I'M STAYING RIGHT HERE WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
IT'S OK...
IT'S OK...
I'LL JUST BE SECOND, THEN WE CAN GO
AL-RIGHT.
THEN WE'LL HEAD FOR NARITA.
YEAH MAYBE I CAN CATCH HIM IF HE'S STILL IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD
YOU GOING TO GIVE IT TO HIM?
SHIRO! TSUBA-SA?
YOU SHOULD GIVE THIS TO HARU-HIKO
HE'S PROBABLY GONE AL-READY, BUT STILL
HEY.
YOU FINALLY DECIDED TO COME BACK
SANWA-KAI...

YOU'VE GOT TO BE CAREFUL AROUND GUNS!
YOU CAN'T DO BUSINESS HOWEVER YOU WANT
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PUT A BULLET IN YOU FOR A LONG WHILE.
KAKU...

I NEVER TOLD YOU PROPERLY
I CAN'T EXPRESS IT IN WORDS
MORE THAN A WIFE, MORE THAN A LOVER, MORE THAN PARENTS AND BROTHERS,
I WAS CLOSER TO YOU THAN ANYONE
I WAS AT EASE ONLY WHEN YOU WERE AROUND YOU UNDERSTOOD ME BETTER THAN ANYONE
AND STILL, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, NOT EVEN ONE WORD
YOU WERE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN ANYONE
THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS NEAR A RESIDENTIAL AREA. AND THE VIOLENT MURDER WAS COMMITTED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT IN FRONT OF NUMEROUS WITNESSES
THE MAN WHO LIVED NEARBY AND WAS UNEMPLOYED WAS IDENTIFIED AS TWENTY-EIGHT YEAR OLD KAKU NINOMIYA
ONE MAN TOOK A BULLET TO THE HEAD AND DIED
SHOOTING OCCURRED TODAY ON THE BUSY STREETS OF A TOKYO WARD

I'M LONELY
HARUHIKO?
MR. AOKE
...
...
DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT — IT'S SOME KIND OF COINCIDENCE MEETING LIKE THIS HUH?
I USED EVERYTHING I HAD TO FIND YOU.
ARE YOU SERIOUS ...?
AREN'T YOU SOME KIND OF YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR BY NOW?
OF COURSE, SOUTHEAST Asia
THAT HASN'T CHANGED, HAS IT?
...IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE
I WENT BACK HOME AFTER WHAT HAPPENED
I DIDN'T TAKE OVER MY FATHER'S BUSINESS, THOUGH

YOU TOOK AHOLD OF YOUR OWN WINGS, THEN
NOW DID YOU MAKE IT, BACK THEN?
I LAID LOW AND WAITED,
WITH THE MEMORIES OF MY YOUTH
YOUR PASSPORT
HE WENT OUT TO GIVE IT TO YOU
THAT'S WHAT HE WAS DOING OUT THERE...
I KNOW "SHIRO! TSUBASA", RIGHT?
THE POLICE CAME TO MY PLACE TOO, AFTERWARDS...
I ENVIED THE TWO OF YOU BACK THEN
IS IT OK IF I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
WERE YOU IN LOVE WITH HIM?

HIDDEN BEHIND THE DOOR TO AOHIGE'S FIRST WIFE'S ROOM...

❖ End ❖

笑わない人魚

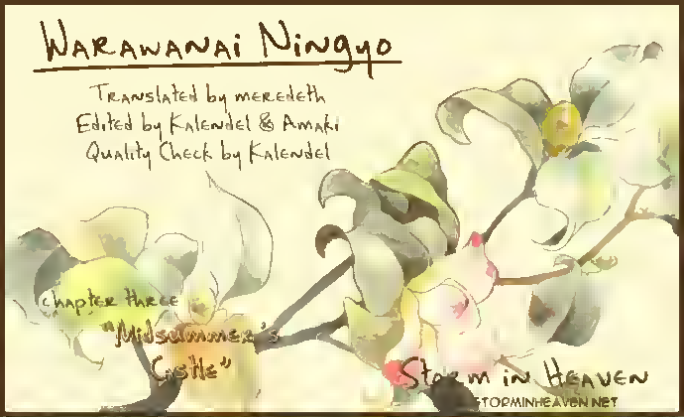
遍遊魚の孤独

書記の友人

真夏の城

Warawanai Ningyo

Translated by meredeth
Edited by Kalendel & Amaki
Quality Check by Kalendel



chapter three
"Midsummer's Castle"

Storm in Heaven

STORMINHEAVEN.NET

Midsummer's Castle

—HOW MANY YEARS SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HOME?
ABOUT TEN
AREN'T YOU BROKEN UP ABOUT YOUR DAD'S DEATH?
YEAH
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "YEAH"?
WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN, I RAN AWAY FROM HOME AND WENT TO LIVE WITH MY UNCLE IN TOKYO
SINCE THEN I HAVEN'T HAD ANY CONTACT WITH ANYONE HERE
LISTEN, KAWAE, WHY DON'T YOU HEAD OVER TO THE HOTEL
"JUST FOR THE OCCASION?"
NO. I'M COMING TO THE WAKE, TOO I PREPARED A LITTLE SOMETHING JUST FOR THE OCCASION

IT WOULDN'T BE ODD FOR ME TO COME, WOULD IT?
IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL FOR THE COMPANY PRESIDENT TO GO TO HIS EMPLOYEE'S FATHER'S WAKE
IT'S A LITTLE... ALRIGHT, THEN JUST WAIT BY THE CAR, PLEASE
ISN'T THAT THE WRONG WAY?
YOU REALLY DON'T WANT ME TO COME?
I REALLY DON'T
BUT THIS IS COMPLETELY "THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON," ISN'T IT?
MY CONDOLENCES
WE'RE HONORED YOU COULD MAKE IT
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
HE'S A CUTE KID
IS HE A RELATIVE?
OOPS HE'S LOOKING
THAT MAN JUST NOW, IS HE ONE OF DAD'S FRIENDS?
HE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM TOKYO
TAKASHI ASADA?

I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A SHOW WITH A BIG LONG STAY, SO IT'S A QUICK PRAYER...
ASADA—?
AAH SUCH A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY
UGH
AND A QUICK RETREAT...
HUH—
AH— UHH, HE'S YEAH HE'S A DISTANT RELATIVE
THE SAME COUNTRY TOWN AS ALWAYS...
PLEASE— THERE'S A SEAT FOR YOU OVER HERE
NO, I REALLY ACTUALLY
— SO THEN, HE WAS IN AND OUT OF THE HOSPITAL—
HE WAS SEVENTY-TWO YEARS OLD
UGH
NO... HE WOULD BE SO HAPPY... PLEASE, STAY FOR A WHILE.
MY CONDOLENCES
...THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR CONTACTING ME MA'AM
NO, I...

...I WANTED TO GO HOME WITHOUT SEEING ANYONE
THERE'S REALLY NO PLACE FOR ME HERE
AH~
...WHY ISN'T AKIRA HERE YET?
PLEASE, DO COME FOR THE FUNERAL SERVICE TOMORROW
WE'VE SET A PLACE FOR YOU AT THE DINNER TABLE AS WELL
WE CONTACTED HIM, BUT I DON'T KNOW, ALL THE WAY FROM GERMANY?
AKIRA BECAME A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER DIDN'T HE?
HE'S THE YOUNGEST AND HE CAN'T EVEN MAKE IT TO HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL...
YEAH HE HAD BEEN TEACHING
BUT HE WENT INTO BUSINESS AND HE'S IN GERMANY NOW
HIS PLANE HAD SOME SUDDEN PROBLEMS AND COULDN'T TAKE OFF HE CAN'T MAKE TOMORROW'S FUNERAL EITHER
WHAT HE WON'T BE HERE?
THAT KID SO THEN HE'S THE CHILD OF THE ELDEST SON
EVERYONE LOOKS SO ELEGANT IT'S WONDERFUL, ISN'T IT?
AAH...
YOUR CO-WORKER, ASADA?
YOU COULD SAY THAT

I'M THE COMPANY PRESIDENT KAWAE
ASADA-KUN HERE STARTED WORKING FOR ME FIVE YEARS AGO. THESE DAYS, HE'S MY RIGHT HAND MAN
SIR
"PARADISE PLANNING"?
I'M SORRY... PLEASE ACCEPT MY CONDOLENCES
WE LOOK FOR UNKNOWN SIGHTSEEING DESTINATIONS... SO, I'D HEARD THAT ASADA-KUN'S HOMETOWN HAD BEAUTIFUL SCENERY AND HAD TO COME CHECK IT OUT.
WE ARRANGE INDIVIDUAL TRIPS FOR CUSTOMERS WHO ARE LEERY OF TOURIST TRAPS
YOU COULD CALL US TRAVEL COORDINATORS WELL SIGHTSEEING COORDINATORS
UH WHAT IS...
EH THE SANKEIKAN HOTEL?
I DIDN'T THINK THEY USED THAT PLACE ANY MORE
WHERE ARE YOU STAYING? IF YOU DON'T MIND, MY PLACE IS...
NO... WE'LL BE STAYING AT THE SANKEIKAN HOTEL *
LEAVES ME WITHOUT A LOT OF FRIENDS
UH... SORRY IT JUST SLIPS OUT LIKE THAT...
AH...! OF COURSE WITH ALL THE GREENERY IT IS REALLY NICE, ISN'T IT?
IT'S JUST A COUNTRY TOWN, BUT I SUPPOSE IT IS A NICE PLACE

* Sankeikan, loosely means In the Shade of the Mountain.

—HEY ASADA-KUN, CAN I ASK?
THE ONE WHO DIED IS YOUR FATHER, RIGHT?
SO WHY'S THE LAST NAME DIFFERENT?
—YOU'RE AWFULLY BLUNT TODAY, KAWAE. YOU SURE THAT'S ALRIGHT...?
YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE PARADISE PLANNING A BAD REPUTATION...
WE CAN LEAVE THAT FOR WHEN WE GET BACK TO TOKYO
MY MOTHER WAS MY FATHER'S LOVER. I GUESS THEY SEPARATED BEFORE I WAS BORN, BUT STILL...
I NEVER EVEN MET HIM, AND NOW SUDDENLY THERE'S THIS CORPSE...
YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME ALL THIS BEFORE, YOU KNOW
YEAH... I'M EXHAUSTED. I WANT TO GO HOME ALREADY.
RIGHT... ASADA-KUN...
AFTER THAT CONVERSATION WITH THE REALTOR, WE SHOULD JUST HEAD OVER
RIGHT...
YOU'RE TERRIBLE, SIR... TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE YOUTH OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

"IT NEVER SOLD HUH THAT HOTEL."
"HUH..."
"LOOKS LIKE IT'S HAD A MANAGEMENT SLUMP AND IT'S BEEN CLOSED."
"THERE WAS THIS HOTEL I STAYED AT ONCE."
"... NOTHING JUST THAT IF I GO TO THE WAKE I WON'T BE ABLE TO COME BACK THAT SAME DAY."
"WHAT'S WRONG, ASADA-KUN?"
SEEMS SERVICEABLE ENOUGH. THEY CARRIED OFF THE DECOR AND THE FURNITURE AND THE WHOLE SHOOTING MATCH. THOUGH, SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE COME AT THE PERFECT TIME TO DO SOME FIXING UP.
THAT BUBBLE'S POPPED. IT HAS. GOODNESS
dilapidated
HHH
WELL, DO AS YOU LIKE. THE ELECTRIC'S OFF, AND THE WATER'S THE ONLY THING THAT WORKS.
YOU REALLY GOING TO STAY HERE? IT'S VACANT, YOU KNOW.
THEY SAY PROBLEMS DON'T APPEAR ONLY DURING THE DAY. YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK AT NIGHT, TOO.
IT SURE IS AN OLD BUILDING, HUH? IT WAS RENOVATED ONCE, DURING THE BUBBLE.

UGH
...THE ELECTRIC'S OFF?
...THE LANDSCAPE OF A BURST BUBBLE
MAYBE?
"A HOTEL ON A HILL WITH SMART TAISHO* ARCHITECTURE
ATTENTIVE SERVICE AND A NOSTALGIC ATMOSPHERE *
* Taisho era 1912-26
— EVEN IF WE DID BUY THIS PLACE, IT'S NOT TERRIBLY ACCESSIBLE, AND THAT'S NO GOOD
NAH... IT MIGHT BE QUIET DURING THE DAY, BUT AT NIGHT THE CARS AND STUFF CAN GET PRETTY NOISY
Was that a ghost?
Over there?
WE'LL DO A PROPER CHECK BEFORE WE BUY
Besides it's only us here
YOU THINK WE COULD MOVE IT DOWN THE HILL?
IT'S SWELTERING HUH?
THIS PLACE FELT HIGH-CLASS BACK THEN
I WANTED IT I TRIED STAYING HERE ONCE

IT IS NOT SERIOUSLY
I KNEW IT RIGHT AWAY WHEN I SAW THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES
WELL, SO WITHOUT ANOTHER THOUGHT, YOU JUST DECIDED TO BUY IT, DID YOU?
RIGHT...?
I THOUGHT, I DEFINITELY HAVE TO HAVE A HOTEL THAT GIVES PEOPLE A LOOK LIKE THAT.
HUSH UP, YOU
COMPANY PRESIDENTS SHOULDN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR EMPLOYEE'S TROUBLES
IS THAT ANY KIND OF REASON?
HEY SIR, STOP IT— MY FATHER'S WAKE WAS TODAY
UH— UM
WHO— WHO'S THERE!?
CRASH
!

OH
SO SORRY... DIDN'T MEAN TO SNEAK UP ON YOU
GRANNY GRANDMOTHER SAID TO BRING YOU SOME MOSQUITO REPELLANT
THANKS! DIDN'T I SEE YOU AT THE WAKE THIS AFTERNOON ?
HOW RUDE
OH, BE NICE, PLEASE THE KID DIDN'T MEAN TO SURPRISE US
SORRY... WHAT WAS YOUR NAME?
AKIHIRO ENAMI
YOU BROUGHT IT ALL THE WAY FROM THE HOUSE? IT'S PITCH BLACK OUT THERE. IT'S DANGEROUS
IT'S ALRIGHT THE HOUSE IS RIGHT DOWN THE HILL
I CAN'T LOOK TOO MUCH SHOCK
I'VE GONE PALE AND I'M SHAKING
...PLEASE, LET'S JUST CONTINUE OUR SEARCH FOR THE BED
NO THANKS

WE'RE IN ALL KINDS OF DEBT, PEOPLE WHINING AND COMPLAINING, EVEN OUR STRONG POINTS MIGHT BE CALLED WORTHLESS AT THIS STAGE
WE TRAVEL EVERYWHERE TOGETHER, AND WE RESPECT EACH OTHER.
WE WORK TOGETHER, AND WE HANG OUT TOGETHER,
IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS
WHY NOT?
HAVEN'T WE ALREADY SAID EVERYTHING THERE IS TO SAY?
CAN'T WE MOVE ON TO WHERE THERE AREN'T ANY VAGUE WORDS?
SO PLEASE
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS. HUH?
I HAVE MEMORIES HERE
THIS HOTEL
PLEASE STOP!

—LET'S LEAVE THAT FOR WHEN WE GET BACK TO TOKYO, TOO—
—I'LL SLEEP ON THE FIRST FLOOR SO YOU TAKE THE SECOND OR THIRD FLOOR
I'VE BEEN WAITING SO LONG IT FEELS LIKE FOR-EVER.
I'M SLEEPING ALONE AGAIN TONIGHT
JUST ME AGAIN, ALONE ON THAT PI-LLOW WITH NO UNDERWEAR ON, THINKING ABOUT YOU...
THAT'S WHY"
IT'S JUST THAT KIND OF TALK...!
WHICH ROOM WAS IT ANYWAY?
I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER WAS THE BUILDING OLD LIKE THIS?
I WAS IN SUCH A TRANCE BACK THEN I DIDN'T NOTICE A THING
SUCK

MY SIXTEENTH SUMMER
SQUEAK
I THINK SHE'S THE MISTRESS TO SOME GUY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN NOW AND THEY'VE GOT A CHILD TOGETHER
AFTER A FEW YEARS EVEN MOM CLOSED UP SHOP AND MOVED TO THE CAPITAL
I ENDED UP WITH A BIG SECRET AND RAN FROM THIS TOWN
IF THE WIDOW HADN'T CALLED ME PERSONALLY, I WOULDN'T HAVE COME
I WENT TO TOKYO TO BE A NORMAL PERSON. JUST SOMEONE WHO MAKES A LIVING AND HAS A PROPER JOB.
IF I COME BACK HERE I'LL JUST BE AN OUTCAST AGAIN
EEHH?

"A SUMMER CASTLE HIDDEN IN THE VEGETATION." ...MAYBE.
CERTAINLY A MANSION OF GREENERY
KAWAE
DID YOU GET SOME SLEEP?
YEAH THE SECOND FLOOR IS VERY GOOD IT'S LIKE CAMPING. IT WAS NICE
I'M OFF TO SEE THE LOCAL SIGHTS
A BORN OUTDOORSMAN, AS USUAL
COMING TO THE COUNTRY WOW! WHEE!
HRRR...ZZOO...
UM— GOOD MORNING
IF YOU DON'T MIND WE'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO BREAKFAST

AH... AKIHIRO RIGHT? MORNING.
EH— SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT.
...THE FUNERAL SERVICE IS AT THREE SO YOU CAN HAVE LUNCH WITH US, TOO, IF YOU'D LIKE.
UH—
CAN I... ASK YOU A QUESTION?
I DIDN'T REALLY SLEEP WELL LAST NIGHT, AND NOW THAT FACE...
MR. ASADA... ARE YOU HOMO-SEXUAL?
WOAH, A FAST BALL, HUH?
YEAH, I AM...
YOU'VE BEEN THAT WAY FOR A LONG TIME RIGHT. SO HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?
OH... YOU GET VARIOUS ANSWERS DEPENDING ON WHO YOU TALK TO.
SOME PEOPLE SAY IT'S JUST NATURE, SOME SAY IT'S AN EXPERIENCE AS AN INFANT... SOME PEOPLE SAY IT'S AWAKENED BY SOME TRIGGER
WHICH ONE WAS IT FOR YOU MR ASADA?
I'M THIS WAY BY NATURE
YOU!?

SOMEHOW, I'VE JUST ALWAYS KNOWN. IT WAS ONLY THE SAME KIND
THE SAME GENDER THAT CAUGHT MY EYE
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE YOU CAN TALK ABOUT THIS WITH?
...EH, SORRY...
I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT
WHAT?
HAVING A SECRET AND NOT BEING ABLE TO TELL ANYONE
AAH IT'S LIKE LOOKING AT MYSELF FROM BACK THEN
FIFTEEN
HOW OLD ARE YOU ANYWAY?
IS THERE A KID YOU LIKE?
A FRIEND IN MY CLASSES
I JUST NOTICED HIM THE OTHER DAY...
YOU SHOULDN'T THINK ABOUT IT TOO SERIOUSLY
THERE ARE A HUGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIKE US. IT'S NOT THAT UNUSUAL
RAIN?

AGH!
IT'S POURING!
...LET'S GO BACK!
BREAK-FAST IS OUT OF THE QUESTION.
...IT SHOULD STOP SOON. THE WEATHER REPORT SAID IT WOULD BE CLEAR.
UGH...
IT'S SO SWELTE-RING...
KAWAE'S PROBABLY GETTING DRENCHED TOO
IT'S HOT...
...AND THE SMELL OF THE GRASS IS SUFFO-CATING...
I CAN'T TAKE IT...

WHEN YOU WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL, ASADA, WAS THERE ANYONE YOU LIKED?
YEAH, THERE WAS
WHO WAS IT? HOW DID IT TURN OUT?
I COULD NEVER CONFESS MY FEELINGS TO THE GUY I LIKE —
I FEEL LIKE I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE
HEY,
DO YOU KNOW THE STORY OF THE SPARTAN FOX?
— MY WORLD HISTORY TEACHER TOLD IT TO ME A LONG TIME AGO
IN THE ANCIENT GREEK CITY-STATE OF SPARTA,
THEY EDUCATED THEIR KIDS SO STRICTLY THAT THEY COINED A PHRASE AFTER IT 'A SPARTAN EDUCATION'—
THEY HAD VERY STRICT LAWS, TOO
"ONE NIGHT, ONE YOUNG MAN STOLE A FOX CUB..."
MR ASADA WHAT ?
SHH—
"HE HID THE FOX UNDER HIS CLOAK AND STARTED HOME FOR THE NIGHT"
— HE COULDN'T LET HIMSELF BE SHAMED IN FRONT OF ANYONE, HE JUST COULDN'T BEAR IT

"...ON HIS WAY HOME THAT NIGHT, HE MET AN ADULT."
CLOSE YOUR EYES...
THINK ABOUT THE PERSON YOU LIKE...
"THE BOY COULDN'T BE DISCOVERED STEALING THE FOX,
SO HE HELD IT DOWN INSIDE HIS CLOAK SO IT COULDN'T MOVE."
"BUT NO MATTER HOW HARD HE HELD IT, THE FOX STRUGGLED HARDER
IT GNAWED AT HIS STOMACH."
"THE BOY ENDURED THE PAIN AND CONTINUED TO HOLD THE FOX STILL, EVEN AS IT TORE INTO THE BOY'S STOMACH."

YEAH
WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN, RIGHT HERE
SO KEEP AT IT WITH THE PEOPLE YOU TRULY LIKE, OKAY?
"IT'S A STORY ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND SPIRIT OF SPARTAN BOYS."
"EVENTUALLY THE BOY DIED..."
HIS SECRET DESTROYED HIM
SOMETIMES IT HAPPENS GRADUALLY
...DID YOU DO ANYTHING WITH THE PERSON YOU REALLY LIKED?
WHAT? IN THIS HOTEL?
IT WAS ONLY A TWO WEEK AFFAIR
HE WAS A UNIVERSITY STUDENT WHO CAME HERE FOR TEACHING PRACTICE
HE WAS MY WORLD HISTORY TEACHER, AND HE WAS TALL
HOLDING IT IN GOT TOO PAINFUL
AND I WENT TO CONFESS ON THE LAST DAY
WE CAME HERE JUST LIKE THIS IN THE HEAT
IT WAS LIKE A MIRACLE
...BUT IN ANOTHER HOUR OR TWO, I REALIZED I HAD A NEW SECRET
I COULDN'T TELL ANYONE I'D BEEN WITH HIM LIKE THAT
I GOT SCARED AND PITCHED THE FOX I RAN TO TOKYO AWAY FROM THIS TOWN AWAY FROM HIM

I JUST WENT A LITTLE CRAZY, THAT'S ALL.
THE SMELL OF THE RAIN,
THE SUFFOCATING SCENT OF GRASS
THE HOT AND HUMID AIR THAT FILLED MY NOSTRILS
...SO DON'T YOU MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE, OKAY?
NEVER ONCE THINKING THAT MAYBE THE FLEEING FOX WOULD TEAR INTO HIM...
WHAT? THAT'S ALL THAT HAPPENED WITH HIM?
...EVERYONE PLEASE LISTEN FOR A MOMENT.
I THINK THERE ARE SOME OF YOU HERE WHO KNOW, BUT ASADA HERE IS MY HUSBAND'S SON.
YOU'RE KIDDING RIGHT? OUR FATHER?
BUT BECAUSE HE'S YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER
HE LIVES IN TOKYO WITH HIS MOTHER RIGHT NOW
DID YOU KNOW?

I CAN MAKE MY FINAL FAREWELL AT LAST...
I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE ON.
PLEASE, I DON'T NEED TO BE INCLUDED...!
JUST CONTACTING ME WAS ENOUGH.
IF WE CAN, ASADA SHOULD INHERIT SOMETHING TOO...
PLEASE, STOP IT!
ASADA...!
...I'M SURE FATHER DID PLENTY OF THINGS TO YOU.
AND NOW WE'VE MADE SUCH TROUBLE FOR YOU.
NO...
...I APOLOGIZE
I HAD NO IDEA
LYING IS NOT MY STRONG POINT.
MAYBE IF I COULD SPEAK MY MIND, I COULD GET SOME RELIEF.
KAWAE?

ONLY BECAUSE WE'RE SO CLOSE, AND IT'S HOT!
AND YOUR EYES ARE GETTING MISTY
I DON'T WANT TO ...!
WHAT!? BUT YOU'RE EXCITED! AND YOUR FACE IS RED
SERIOUSLY... CUT ME A BREAK THIS TIME
I'M CRAZY ABOUT YOU...!
SO JUST KEEP QUIET
STOP IT!
... WHAT A STUBBORN PERSON YOU ARE.
THERE'S NO NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT SO MUCH.

... LAST NIGHT YOU HAD THE SECOND FLOOR, SO TONIGHT YOU GET THE THIRD.
NEVER MAKE A RASH DECISION, DO YOU? EVEN IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS, YOU HESITATE
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR FIVE YEARS, AND YOU'VE NEVER SAID A WORD ABOUT YOUR PARENTS
... KAWAE
SOME-TIMES I JUST CAN'T SETTLE THINGS

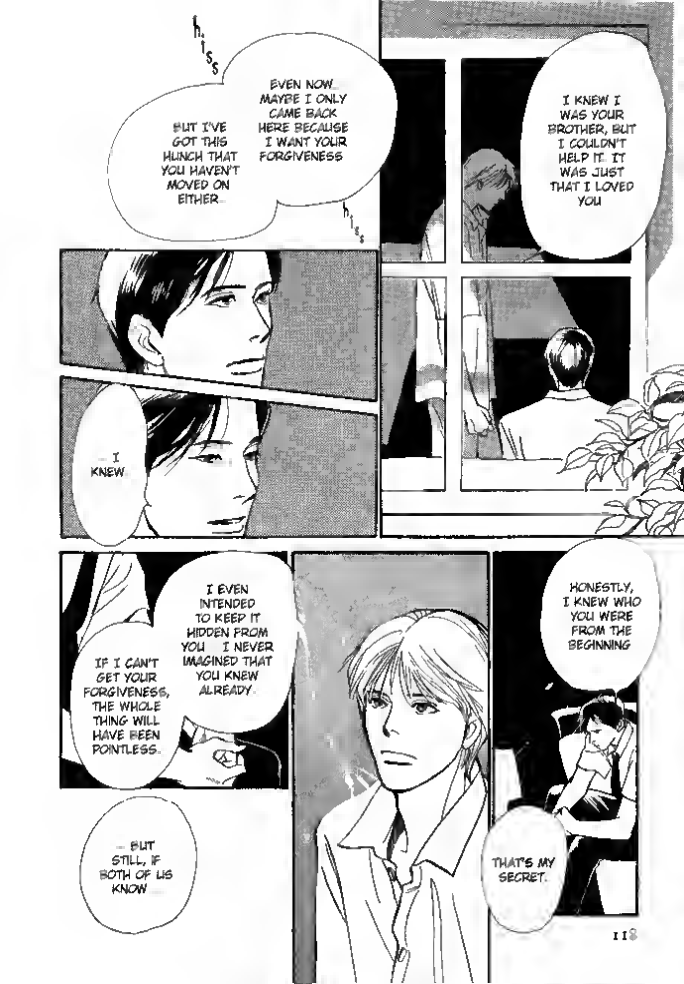
...EVEN THOUGH I WANT KAWAE SO BADLY,
THESE SECRETS AND DESIRES TEAR AT MY STOMACH
I STILL CAN'T ALLOW MYSELF
YEAH
WHEN WE GET BACK TO TOKYO WE'LL HAVE A LONG TALK
GOOD MORNING
HOW ABOUT BREAK-FAST THIS MORNING?
AH-HA, YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD
LOCAL SIGHTSEEING AGAIN? WHEN THE HECK DOES HE INTEND TO GO BACK TO TOKYO?

I DON'T THINK ANYONE ANYWHERE COULD CRUSH THIS NAIVTEE OF YOURS. BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S JUST ANNOYING.
?
YOU'RE LOOKING ESPECIALLY NICE THIS MORNING, TOO, MR. ASADA.
THIS IS MY ADDRESS IN TOKYO
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, YOU CAN TALK TO ME
THANKS!
I DEFINITELY WILL. YOU ARE MY UNCLE AFTER ALL, HUH?
HEY
HOW DO YOU KNOW IF HE LIKES YOU TOO?
...IT'S IN THE EYES
THEY SAY THEY'RE WINDOWS TO THE SOUL
GAZE MEETS GAZE
AND SUDDENLY... IT'S LOVE
THOUGH SOME PEOPLE GET SUNGLASSES TO HIDE BEHIND
RAIN AGAIN...
LET'S GET BACK!

IF KAWAE INTENDS TO GET BACK TODAY, WE'D BETTER GET GOING...
SPLISH
AKIRA...
I SAW HIM EVERYDAY AND MAYBE I MISTOOK THAT FOR FATE
WHILE I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, MY HALF-BROTHER AKIRA ENAMI CAME TO MY SCHOOL TO GET TEACHING EXPERIENCE
BROTHER!

"TEACHER..."
I COULDN'T BEAR THE WEIGHT OF MY SECRET ANY LONGER. AND I WENT TO SEE AKIRA
THAT SUMMER.
AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT I WAS GOING TO CONFESS
HUGG
Splish

...I WAS SO HAPPY WITH YOU, THERE WAS NO TIME FOR SADNESS
I DIDN'T THINK I COULD LIVE IN THE SAME TOWN WITH THAT SECRET SO I LEFT
THIS TIMING IS BEYOND INTENSE.
...I COULDN'T HELP THINKING IT WAS YOUR REVENGE...
IT DOES LOOK LIKE I TRIED TO DECEIVE YOU DOESN'T IT
BUT THAT WASN'T MY INTENTION AT ALL. I HAVE ANOTHER SECRET...
THAT THE FLEEING FOX WOULD TEAR INTO HIM...
I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU, BUT, I COULDN'T BEAR IT IF YOU HEARD ABOUT ME FROM OTHER PEOPLE, SO
...I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW THE ADDRESS BUT I WAS GOING TO LEAVE A LETTER FOR YOU
I NEVER EVEN CONSIDERED


hiss
EVEN NOW, MAYBE I ONLY CAME BACK HERE BECAUSE I WANT YOUR FORGIVENESS
BUT I'VE GOT THIS HUNCH THAT YOU HAVEN'T MOVED ON EITHER...
hiss
I KNEW I WAS YOUR BROTHER, BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT. IT WAS JUST THAT I LOVED YOU
... I KNEW.
I EVEN INTENDED TO KEEP IT HIDDEN FROM YOU. I NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU KNEW ALREADY.
IF I CAN'T GET YOUR FORGIVENESS, THE WHOLE THING WILL HAVE BEEN POINTLESS.
HONESTLY, I KNEW WHO YOU WERE FROM THE BEGINNING
... BUT STILL, IF BOTH OF US KNOW...
THAT'S MY SECRET.

IT'S JUST
LOVE
THEN THERE'S NO NEED FOR ONE-SIDED DECEPTION
SO IT ISN'T A CRIME
THIS TIME, I KNOW WE CAN SAY GOODBYE PROPERLY, AND PART ON GOOD TERMS
THANK YOU
THE SPARTAN FOX'S STRUGGLE,
WILL I REALIZE SOMEDAY THAT EVEN THAT WAS A PHANTOM?
AND THE PAIN FROM A WOUND THAT SHOULDN'T EXIST TOO
NOW, GO AND BE HAPPY
THE PHANTOM WILL DISAPPEAR FOREVER
YEAH
ARE YOU GOING BACK TO GERMANY FOR GOOD?
YEAH

...A LITTLE PEACE OF MIND, HUH?
KAWAE
...THE THIRD FLOOR REALLY IS EXCELLENT I THINK I WILL BUY THIS PLACE AFTER ALL
HE DOES LOOK A LITTLE LIKE ME YOU KNOW
SEEMS I AM YOUR TYPE AFTER ALL, THEN...
YOU WERE WATCHING
EH? IS THAT RIGHT
SO HOW DID IT GO?
WELL...
SOMEHOW WE SETTLED THINGS
ENOUGH
SO...
LET'S MAKE SOME NEW MEMORIES SHALL WE?
HERE?
NOW?
❖ End ❖

Warawanai Ningyo

Translated by meredeth
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Quality Check by Kalendel

chapter four
"The Solitude of Migratory Fish"

Storm in Heaven

STORMINHEAVEN.NET

I'D BEEN CONCERNED FOR A WHILE
I FORGOT IT AT HOME WHEN I WENT BACK TO CHANGE MY CLOTHES
WHAT TIME IS IT NOW?
A LITTLE PAST TEN-THIRTY
WHERE'S YOUR WATCH?
HE WAS A VERY STRANGE MAN
UM— TERASHIMA?
AREN'T YOU MR. TERASHIMA, FROM HEADQUARTERS?
IF HE'S NOT SICK OR A SERIOUS COUNTRY BUMPKIN HE MUST BE SOME KIND OF PERVERT
I'M COTA, FROM THE SUGISAKI BRANCH
ON A BUSINESS TRIP? WHICH REMINDS ME I SAW SOMEONE TODAY AT LUNCH WHO—
NO HE WAS ALONE SO I WAS TRYING TO TALK TO HIM, THAT'S ALL
I'M SORRY WERE YOU TWO TOGETHER?
MM, REALLY?
WELL— DO YOU WANT TO GO GET A DRINK WITH ME? I KNOW A GREAT PLACE
GOOD NIGHT
EH—

The Solitude of Migratory Fish
HAVE YOU HAD ANY CRAB YET?
THANKS, I'LL HOLD OFF ON THE CRAB CAKES
YOUZUKE TERASHIMA... HE WORKS AT THE MAIN BRANCH. SO OF COURSE HE ISN'T A BUMPKIN
SO HE MUST BE EITHER SICK OR PERVERTED

IN ANY CASE, HE WEARS WRIST WATCHES ON BOTH HIS LEFT AND HIS RIGHT ARMS...
AND HE DOESN'T PARTICULARLY TRY TO HIDE IT
AH
MORNING
THANKS FOR LETTING ME STAY THE NIGHT
YOU DON'T REMEMBER
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A BAD SIGN?
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, SO IT WAS REALLY GOOD, BUT STILL
EH!?
?!

YOUR WASHING MACHINE IS COMPLETELY STUFFED WITH ALL YOUR DIRTY CLOTHES YOU THREW UP SO—
TERRIBLY SORRY!
I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE YOU UP, SO I DIDN'T TURN IT ON, BUT
WHAT A COMEDIAN YOU ARE, TERASHIMA.
HUH?
What, what the heck is he talking about? I'm completely clueless
OH.
I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF MAKING MYSELF SOME COFFEE
NO... I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE HOTEL FOR A CHANGE OF CLOTHES.
UM... LET'S HEAD TO WORK TOGETHER
SORRY, DIDN'T MEAN TO...
MY HOTEL'S IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE
BY THE WAY... TERASHIMA, YOU SEEMED TO KNOW THAT SHOP PRETTY WELL
THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT ARE EXACTLY THE SAME, AREN'T THEY?
GOOD THINKING TERASHIMA. BY THE WAY, I NEVER NOTICED THOSE WRIST WATCHES
A-HA-HA-HA-HA.
BESIDES, WOULDN'T THERE BE TROUBLE IF RUMOR GOT AROUND OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US?

AH.
YEAH—
SO THEN WHAT? WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
GREY—
HE SIDE-STEPPED THE WHOLE ISSUE WITH A CLEVER JOKE AND I NEVER FOUND OUT. HE WENT HOME
WHEN I SAW HIM AT THAT CRUISING BAR, I THOUGHT IT WAS A GUISE THING
What! He brought somebody home with him!

A CRUISING BAR? THAT TYPE OF PLACE USUALLY HAS ONLY LOCALS FOR CUSTOMERS RIGHT?
I HEARD FROM A COLLEAGUE HE HAD A GIRL IN TOKYO
YEAH, RIGHT WHY WOULD HE BE LOOKING FOR COMPANIONS IN THE COMPANY?
HE CERTAINLY WAS AMBITIOUS WHEN HE STARTED WORKING HERE.
HE WAS AT THE OONO BRANCH FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS I THINK IT WAS
WELL, HE IS ATTRACTIVE BUT I THINK YOU'RE COMPLETELY WRONG
Maybe he swings both ways
This is so com plicated
BUT HE WEARS TWO WATCHES SO THAT'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING PLUS THEY'RE BOTH MEN'S WATCHES
MAYBE— TERASHIMA'S A LOCAL?
IN THAT CASE, NO WONDER HE KNEW THAT SHOP
TERA-SHIMA!
I KNOW A PLACE WITH GREAT CRAB LET ME TAKE YOU THERE
IS TONIGHT ALRIGHT?
OKAY— I WAS GOING OUT TONIGHT ANYWAY
PLEASE, YOU CAN TAKE YOUR REVENGE FOR HAVING TO CLEAN UP MY PUKE AND STUFF!
O— OKAY...

AAH THOSE EYES!
IS IT OKAY IF I'M A LITTLE LATE? SHALL WE MEET AT THE BAR FROM LAST NIGHT?
SURE!
Later
Hiyah
I DON'T MIND IF HE SWINGS BOTH WAYS
BUT STILL, I'D LIKE HIM TO STOP WEARING BOTH WATCHES
YEAH, YEAH HE WAS IN LINE FOR A PROMOTION AT THE OONO BRANCH,
BUT HE SAID HE PREFERRED THIS BRANCH, AND THAT HE PRACTICALLY LIVED HERE FULL-TIME ANYWAY SO IT SEEMED ALRIGHT
I still need to use that phone
Look at this little sweetie
THEN HE WAS HOSPITALIZED BOTH PARENTS COMPLETELY BAILED AND FOR SOME REASON HE PUT IN TO GO BACK HOME
NOT EXACTLY A REASON FOR RETIREMENT A ONE-NIGHT'S STAY AT THE HOSPITAL
KANAZUCHI-KUN...?
HE WAS SICK?
A GAP
NAH IT WAS AN ACCI-DENT
SOME-THING ABOUT A FOOL
MIGHT BE CUTE
AH... WHAT? TONIGHT?
NO, THAT'S A LITTLE...
NO HONESTLY I CAN'T...
WHY IS IT ALWAYS YOUR CON-VENIENCE THAT...

Always rude!
IRRESPONSIBLE JERK!
IS THAT RIGHT
BUT HE'S WORRIED ABOUT MORE THAN THAT
THERE'S NO BOATS ON THE WEEKEND
SO THE SALESMAN WAS COMPLETELY LIVID
GUESS WE WON'T BE EATING MUCH CRAB THESE DAYS THEN, HUH?
IT'S BASICALLY FINE IF A GUY'S NOT MARRIED
BUT I'M STARTING TO THINK IT'D BE BETTER IF HE WERE GAY
OOTA!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING!
OH!
IT'S NOT EVEN THAT OLD
OH, THIS? IT'S BROKEN ANYWAY
BUT THE JERK BOUGHT IT FOR ME WHEN I GOT MY FIRST JOB SO I CAN'T REALLY THROW IT AWAY
OH, IS THAT IT, THEN
SUCH A SERIOUS REASON I WAS WONDERING WHY YOU MADE SUCH A FUSS
LIAR! THROW IT OUT!
SICK SICK SICK
BESIDES, THIS WAY EVEN IF I CHANGE, SOMETHING'LL STILL BE THE SAME
Ah! I can't get it now!

I HIT MY HEAD ON THE EDGE OF THE POOL AND PRACTICALLY DROWNED
UH, A WHILE BACK,
I GOT DRUNK AND FELL IN THE POOL WITH ALL MY CLOTHES ON
LOVE-SICK
OH, BY THE WAY YOU'RE A LOCAL DO YOU SWIM?
EVER SINCE
YOU MIGHT LAUGH, BUT I ALMOST DIED.
MY WHOLE LIFE FLASHED BEFORE ME
My watch stroke
The needle stopped at seven o clock. Maybe the exact moment I died.
NO! I'M AFRAID OF WATER! IN THE OCEAN.
YOU, TOO...?
THANKS FOR INVITING ME TODAY
I MISSED MY CHANCE TO EAT SOME NEW YEAR'S CRAP THIS YEAR
NO GOOD-NESS
PLEASE JUST LET THIS ERASE THAT WHOLE PUKE INCIDENT
OOTA, CAN I?
UH--
THIS IS A FRIEND OF MINE SORT OF IS IT ALRIGHT IF HE EATS WITH US?
SURE PLEASED TO MEET YOU I M TERASHIMA.
UH, GOOD TO MEET YOU
HU——H
WHO'S THIS, THEN?
YOUR NEXT MAN GONNA BE THIS TYPE?

WELL THEN I'M REALLY SORRY, OOTA.
THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING
I WOULDN'T MIND SLEEPING WITH YOU ONCE OR TWICE, AND WE DO SEEM TO GET ALONG... BUT I WASN'T THINKING I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU.
IF IT'S LIKE THAT, SAY SO ALREADY. NO WONDER YOU'VE BEEN SO COLD-HEARTED RECENTLY.
IS THAT RIGHT...
WAIT! HEY...
I'M ONLY HERE TO PLAY AROUND, I THOUGHT I'D EXPLAINED
SO IF THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE LIKE THIS, COULD YOU LEAVE ME OUT OF IT, PLEASE?
Yeah,?
THAT ASIDE, SEX WITH YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE
WELL, GOOD LUCK
TERA-SHIMA!
TE—

EH--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOLLOWING ME OUT HERE?
haa haa haa
IT'S POINTLESS WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND STALKING YOU LIKE THAT
NO
NO NO, NO
I MADE A FAILED ATTEMPT AT IT MYSELF ONCE
THERE IS SOMETHING GLORIOUS ABOUT HAVING AN AFFAIR TO MAKE YOUR BOYFRIEND JEALOUS, THOUGH
BUT, IT'S IRREVOCABLE THE WOUNDS REMAIN AND THE AFFAIR STAYS OVER
N, NO, THERE'S BEEN SOME KIND OF MISTAKE!!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN I'M GAY!?
MH?
SOMETHING INDEED
THERE'S SOMETHING
YOU'RE PRETTY SCREWED
WHAT!
YOUR PLAN'S GONE COMPLETELY WRONG

I DON'T REALLY CARE IF PEOPLE IN THE COMPANY KNOW ABOUT MY ORIENTATION BUT
OH SORRY.
I CAN NEVER TELL WITH OTHER PEOPLE
IT'S SUCH A PUZZLE.
BUT TONIGHT SERIOUSLY, THAT GUY JUST FORCED HIS WAY IN
HE'S THE TYPE THAT...
Only thinks about the sex
I THOUGHT YOU LIKED THE DRAMA.
JUST USED ME AS A STALKING HORSE
HEY...
YOU SHOULD HAVE A PROPER CONVERSATION ABOUT IT
MA...
MAYBE I DID FEEL LIKE THAT A LITTLE BUT...
HAVE YOU TWO GONE OUT?
WELL... THE JERK DOESN'T HANG OUT TOO MUCH WITH PEOPLE LIKE ME
JUST IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE EVERY DAY IF YOU NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.
WE WERE BOTH SO AWKWARD
I'VE ALWAYS GOTTEN ALONG WITH PEOPLE WHO WORK IN FISHING PORTS EVER SINCE I WAS A STUDENT...
A FISHERMAN!? THAT'S UNEXPECTED...
TERASHIMA...

WHEN WE HAD A FIGHT, NEITHER ONE OF US WOULD APOLOGIZE, AND WE'D AVOID EACH OTHER FOR WEEKS
HE WAS SO QUIET AND I WAS JUST A CHILD
WE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THINGS LIKE WHETHER OR NOT WE LIKED EACH OTHER.
HOW ABOUT JUST SAYING IT LIKE THIS...
HE'S THE SULLEN TYPE
ACTUALLY... I'VE LIKED HIM SINCE I WAS FOURTEEN
I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUT IT ALL INTO WORDS.
WELL STILL, SOMEHOW WE KEPT GOING... I WAS HEAD OVER HEELS FOR HIM
PASSIONATE PEOPLE CAN NEVER TELL
"YOU LIKE HIM?!"
"I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. IS HE SWIMMING WHILE HE'S DRUNK LIKE THAT?"
"YOU-ZLIKE..."
TWO YEARS AGO... WE HAD A FIGHT, LIKE ALWAYS, AND I GOT HORRIBLY DRUNK...

"WHY DON'T WE JUST STOP THIS."
HE STARTED GETTING VERBALLY ABUSIVE...
AFTER THAT, HE MADE A BEELINE FOR THE SCENE OF THE CRIME
"I'M JUST COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED. IT'S AMAZING WE LASTED THIS MANY YEARS."
"...I'M WORN OUT."
WELL, EVENTUALLY, MY PARENTS DISCOVERED OUR RELATIONSHIP.
I TRIED PLAYING AROUND WITH OTHER MEN
HE TRIED MAKING ME JEALOUS WITH GUYS FROM HIS PAST.
"BUTT OUT, WILL YOU!"
...THE OCEAN IS FRIGHTENING
"YOU'RE GOING SWIMMING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?"
"HOLD ON."
"LET'S HAVE A RACE!"

I CAUGHT JUST A GLANCE OF HIS WHITE BODY IN THE DARKNESS OF THE WAVES
AND IT VANISHED
IT'S PITCH BLACK
THE WAVES SWALLOW YOU AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY IS UP.
I WAS FROZEN.
I COULDN'T STOP, BUT I COULDN'T FOLLOW HIM.
I REALIZED THAT EVEN WHEN WE WERE TOGETHER, I WAS ALWAYS AN OUTSIDER
IF I C..N'T PUT MY HANDS ON HIM WHEN HE'S RIGHT NEXT TO ME.
I WAS JUST ANOTHER MAN WHO KEPT COMING BACK...
BECAUSE HE'S SO STUBBORN, HE WON'T ACCEPT ANY HELP
BECAUSE OF REGRET,
I ABSOLUTELY CAN'T LET GO

...WHEN I COME TO THIS TOWN, WHEREVER I AM, THE SE FOLLOWS ME.
IT'S DEPRESS-ING...
SO SOME-THING LIKE THAT PROBABLY WONDERING WHY I LED YOU ON
IT WAS FUN, THOUGH
YEAH YOU REALLY LED ME ON. BUT I GUESS...
SORRY...
THAT'S A HIGH HURDLE
OF COURSE I PREFER OLDER MEN
OLDER FISHER-MEN...
IT'S OKAY

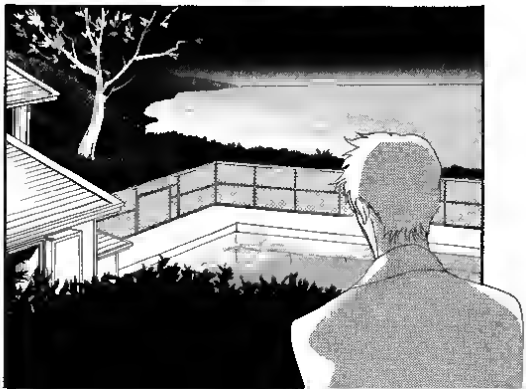
NO
I JUST LOADED UP YOUR WASHING MACHINE.
LAST NIGHT... WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, DID WE?
I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THAT
TERA-SHIMA.
THE SEA ISN'T SO FRIGHTENING IN THE DAYTIME. YOU SHOULD TRY IT.
OH.
EVEN AMONG THE LOCALS THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE WHO GO SWIMMING AT NIGHT
IS THAT SO...
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO THE SEA IN THE DAYTIME.
... HOW'D IT GO?
HAVE A NICE DATE?
HOW ABOUT YOURS KENJOU?
EH?
DIDN'T YOU END UP WITH THAT MACHO KATAYAMA OR WHATEVER?
OH...
THE GUY'S A FISHERMAN AND HE CAN'T EVEN SWIM.

I'M
ME
YOU KNOW?
I WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU JUST NOW, AND SO I CAME BACK BUT...
HE'S DIRECTIONALLY CHALLENGED
AFTERWARDS I SWAM OUT TO THE ISLAND AND WAITED AROUND FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS. BUT
WHEN I WAS FOURTEEN, I SAW A MERMAID IN A POOL AT NIGHT.
I WAS SO SCARED, BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL CREATURE.
...THE JERK TURNED BACK FOR THE SHORE AFTER ABOUT TEN MINUTES.
TCH...
I'VE ALWAYS, ALWAYS LOVED YOU, KENJOU.
SINCE THEN, I'VE ALWAYS...
WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?
YOU'RE ALWAYS PREPPED FOR AN UNNECESSARY ARGUMENT.
WOULD YOU STILL WANT TO SLEEP WITH ME?
YOU'VE GOT SOME KIND OF FIXATION ON MY BACK, YOUZUKE
WITHOUT THE SCAR, I'M JUST ANOTHER MAN.

YOU-ZUKE!
SUNDAY IS MY SISTER'S WEDDING, SO I'M GOING BACK TOMORROW
AT LEAST GIVE ME BACK MY WATCH
THERE'S SOMETHING I SHOULD TELL YOU
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU BOUGHT A NEW ONE?
IF YOU GO BACK TO THE PLACE WHERE YOU LEFT IT,
YOU MIGHT FIND IT AGAIN

HELLO?
YOU'RE NEVER COMING BACK?
YOU CAN BUY A NEW ONE FOR THE PRICE OF A ROUND TRIP TICKET TO TOKYO
HEY I LIKE YOU ENOUGH... PROBABLY...
...HOW OBNOXIOUS! CUT IT OUT ALREADY...
THAT BIG STUPID JERK!

IT'S LIKE HE KNEW...
I'M ALWAYS WORRIED
Again!
HOW MANY YEARS, AND "I LIKE YOU"?
GO BACK TO TOKYO AND WAIT FOR THE NEXT BUSINESS TRIP?
WHAT DO I DO NOW?

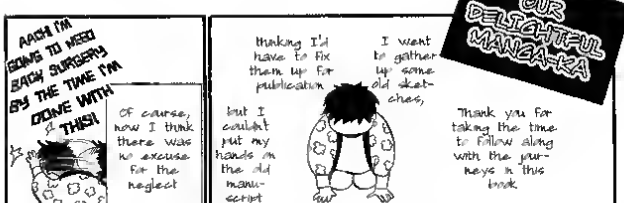

WON'T THAT JUST BE THE SAME THING ALL OVER AGAIN?

KENJOU?
WHAT'S HE LOOKING AT?
THE ROAD BETWEEN HERE AND THE STATION

WHO...
YOU-ZUKE!?
YOUZU...
WAS HE ALWAYS WAITING FOR ME?
SPLASH
YOU-ZUKE!

DON'T YOU EVER HAVE THAT THOUGHT AGAIN...
STOP IT!
I'M SORRY I... I'M SORRY!
I NEVER EVEN SAID I WAS SORRY!
I LOST YOU!
DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND? MY FEELINGS FOR YOU BACK THEN...
DON'T EVER WORRY ABOUT LOSING ME!
I'LL MAKE AN EFFORT, TOO!
ENOUGH ALREADY!
I'M THE ONE WHO'S CHANGED...
I'M SORRY
I CAN'T CHANGE ANY MORE!
I WON'T DIE BEFORE YOU
I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN
I LEFT YOU ALONE I'M SORRY

Flash
DON'T YOU HAVE A WEDDING TOMORROW?
IT'S OKAY I'M ALREADY DISOWNED
RUMOR HAS IT THAT YOUZUKE TERASHIMA TRANSFERRED TO THE OONO CITY BRANCH
I HEARD HE STOPPED WEARING BOTH HIS WATCHES AND THAT HE BOUGHT A NEW ONE
THESE DAYS HE ONLY WEARS ONE
HOW DULL... COMMON, EVEN
YEAH...
IT IS A RELIEF THOUGH
YEAH
❖ End ❖


AAGH I'M GOING TO NEED EACH SURGERY BY THE TIME I'M DONE WITH THIS!
Of course, now I think there was no excuse for the neglect
thinking I'd have to fix them up for publication
but I couldn't put my hands in the old manuscript
I want to gather up some old sketches,
Thank you for taking the time to follow along with the journeys in this book
OUR DELIGHTFUL MANZA-KA

It didn't appear in the story, but Ayumi Kenyu maybe does office work for a fishing cooperative
Maybe if one of the characters was a company man, it would have been more clear
"Warawanai Ningyou" theme: Adult Passion
Well, I mean
He h,
Were they really adults?
every story had a theme
The third story of this re-recording was included in an anthology called COO (cool)

A comment from a friend
I'd like to read another story about these two
Ee Really?
Tsuki thanks
I made these characters to be read all in one sitting
"Midsummer Castle theme: Hotel"
Age doesn't matter I'm young at heart that's what
Due to a misprint during publication, Hanmuya's age became 98 years, but he was always a heart-breaker
"Mohoges Friend" theme: Blue

Special Thanks!
Ajiro-sama
Takamoto-sama
Noda-sama
Koushi-sama
Minomi-sama
Thanks so much!
credit for putting up with persistent bother of helping me get this book to release goes to the people in charge, the three M-sama Truly, thank you very much
And to close,
The comics are being released so please take a look
It's being serialized in Yoshifumi's Hanaoto "A little further to Paradise
I've started drawing a story of when they met